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# FAME AND FORTUNE

STORIES OF BOYS WEEKLY WHO MAKE MONEY.

## THE ROAD TO WEALTH; OR, THE BOY WHO FOUND IT OUT.

By A SELF-MADE MAN.



The sight of the golden coins aroused all the cupidity in Ezra Stapleton's nature. Swinging aloft the heavy whip handle, he rushed upon the boy. Jack raised his arm to protect himself. "Git!" roared the farmer, pointing to the road.



# Fame and Fortune Weekly

## STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

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# The Road to Wealth

OR,

## The Boy Who Found It Out

By A SELF-MADE MAN.

### CHAPTER I.

#### JACK GRANGER AND HIS FRIEND BOB.

"Hello, Jack, what's the matter? You're looking down in the mouth," said Bob Munson.

"I guess I don't look any worse than I feel," replied Jack Granger, soberly.

"Been having another run-in with your Uncle Ezra?"

"Yes. He's getting worse every day. If it wasn't for Aunt Mary I'd pull up stakes and run away. I'm sick and tired of being pulled over the coals for nothing."

"I don't blame you. You're having a hard time of it."

"Bet your life I am. The farm is going to the dogs ever since Mr. Stapleton got into the habit of hanging around the tavern talking politics instead of attending to work. Andy McPike, our hired man, is getting disgusted, too. His wages are in arrears, and he has threatened to leave. That's what made Mr. Stapleton mad this morning, and as he was afraid to say much to Andy, lest he pack up and quit, he took satisfaction out of me."

"What did you have to do with the matter?"

"Nothing."

"Then why did your uncle go for you?"

"Because he wanted to get square on somebody."

"And you were the victim," said Bob, sympathetically.

"Yes, as usual," growled Jack, with a frown.

"It's a blamed shame," replied Bob, indignantly.

"That's what it is."

"You work harder on the farm than any two boys I know of."

"I try to do my duty."

"I don't see that you get much for doing it."

"I get abused right along."

"Doesn't your uncle pay you anything?"

"Not a cent."

"Why, any farmer around here would be glad to hire you and give you a square deal," said Bob.

"I guess they would. I had a good offer from John Varney, who knows what I'm up against."

"Why don't you take it. Your uncle hasn't any claim on you."

"I would take it in two shakes of a lamb's tail only I don't want to leave Aunt Mary. She's been as good as a mother to me ever since my own mother died, and I was thrown on my own resources. She gave me a home when I needed one, and I wouldn't go back on her for a farm," said Jack, resolutely.

Bob couldn't help respecting his friend's loyalty to his aunt, and he wondered how long Jack's patience would hold out against his uncle's systematic ill-treatment.

"You've been living on this farm ever since I can remember," said Munson.

"I've been here eleven years."

"Your uncle wasn't always as hard on you as he is now."

"No. He treated me fair enough at first. Sent me to school when school kept, and only expected me to do such chores as I could attend to. As soon as I was strong



enough he put me to work in the fields with Andy, who was then only a big boy. I was always willing to do my share of work, and he can't say I ever shirked what was laid out for me to do."

"You've the reputation of being a hustler," nodded Bob. "Even at play, with the rest of us chaps, you have always taken the lead. We all miss you these days because you don't seem able to get away as often as we could wish. You ought to have more time to amuse yourself."

"I ought to have a good many things that I don't get. Look at these clothes. This is my best suit."

Bob looked, and was obliged to admit that Jack's attire was nothing to brag about.

None of the boys in the neighborhood were able to sport fine clothes, that is, none but Herbert Gleason, the village lawyer's son, but there was not one but had a better suit than Jack's best.

As for his every-day garments, the least said the better—Mr. Stapleton considered them good enough for work about the farm, and he was either unwilling, or unable, to procure better ones for the boy.

"If it was me I'd want a better outfit for Sundays," said Bob.

"If Mr. Stapleton was your uncle you could take it out in wanting," replied Jack.

"I'm glad I've got a father, and am not dependent on any uncle," answered Bob, and he had never appreciated that advantage as he did at that moment.

"You're lucky, Bob. If I had a father things would be different with me."

"Is Mrs. Stapleton your father's or your mother's sister?"

"Father's. She and father thought the world of each other."

"I don't wonder then that she treats you well."

"She thinks a lot of me, and does a lot for me; that's why I'm willing to stand a whole lot for her."

"I suppose she has her own troubles with Mr. Stapleton."

"He doesn't abuse her any, I'll say that for him, but there are other ways a man can make his wife miserable. Her peace of mind doesn't seem to count much with him, or he'd quit wasting his time and money at the village tavern. He used to be industrious enough once upon a time, but something changed him, and he's been going from bad to worse by degrees. If he keeps on he'll lose the farm."

"Is it mortgaged?"

"Not that I know of. I don't believe he could raise much on it. It's the smallest one in this neighborhood, and rather out at the elbows. The fences are dilapidated, a good part of it is stony, and the house is much the worse for wear. I heard Farmer Jenkins say a little while ago that he wouldn't take the place for a gift, but of course he didn't really mean that."

The two boys were standing in the road not far from the lane that led to the Stapleton farmhouse, which was

situated on the summit of a low bluff overlooking a long and narrow indentation of the Massachusetts coast off Vineyard Sound.

Jack Granger, the elder of the two, was a strong, well-made boy, with a frank, honest face, tanned by exposure to the sun and all kinds of weather.

He was a manly, fearless-looking lad, and his strongly chiseled countenance bespoke an unusual resolute and ambitious nature.

A physiognomist would have said that he was a boy that was bound to succeed in whatever he undertook.

All the girls of the neighborhood said Jack was handsome, and it is to be presumed that their opinion was worth something.

At any rate, he was a popular favorite with them as well as with the lads, too.

Bob Munson, his particular friend, was the only son of a well-to-do farmer, whose land adjoined the Stapleton property, and Bob's sister Grace held first place among the girls in Jack's esteem.

Bob was a good fellow, though not in the same class, physically and mentally speaking, with Jack Granger.

He thought a lot of Jack, and was never so contented as when in his company.

The two boys had no secrets from each other, and what Jack wasn't willing to do for Bob isn't worth mentioning.

Jack was a little over five years of age when his mother's death made him an orphan, and he came from Boston to live with his father's sister Mary.

At that time, and for many years after, Ezra Stapleton was a fairly prosperous farmer, though he never was a sociable or popular man, and things went very well on the farm.

A couple of years before the opening of this story Mr. Stapleton had a streak of hard luck—his crops failed, and he met with some financial losses where he had expected to make easy money—and his disposition and habits suffered from it.

One would have thought that his nephew was the cause of his trouble from the way he made a dead set at him and kept it up.

From a moderate drinker he became a more or less intemperate one.

His talk, both at home and at the tavern, showed that he had a standing grouch against the world, and when a mood of this kind lays hold of a man his prospects are not likely to improve, but are more apt to take a slump.

Jack had been to the village store, half a mile away, for some supplies his aunt needed, and his arms were filled with bundles.

He had met Mr. Stapleton sunning himself on the front stoop of the store in company with a couple of kindred spirits, who also had grievances against the community, and his uncle no sooner saw him than he began to accuse him of encouraging Andy McPike to leave the farm.

He abused the lad in such terms that Jack returned



homeward with no very kind feelings in his heart toward his aunt's husband.

As he approached the entrance to the farm Bob Munson, who was on his way to the village, came along, and, as a matter of course, the boys stopped to have a talk.

"Well," said Bob, "I've got to get on. I've got a note to deliver from my mother to the dressmaker, Miss Prim. When are you coming up to our place?"

"Not before Sunday, I guess."

"Well, Grace seems to be dead anxious to see you. You appear to be the whole thing with her."

Jack flushed, though the color didn't show very plainly through the sunburn.

"Your sister is a nice girl," he said, earnestly.

"Yes, she's all right. Coming down swimming after sundown?"

"I won't promise, but I'll be there if I can."

"We'll look for you, anyway. Good-by."

"Good-by, Bob."

Jack turned in at the lane, while Bob continued on to the village.

## CHAPTER II.

### JACK'S DISCOVERY.

At a point along shore opposite the dividing line between the Stapleton and Munson farms there was the wreck of an old scow.

It had been there for many months, and it marked the place where the farm and village boys came to bathe during the season when that sport was most inviting.

About sundown on the day with which our story opens about a dozen boys were to be seen in various stages of undress preparing for a swim in the water tinged by the last rays of the declining sun.

"Do you think Jack will be here?" Will Watson asked Bob Munson.

"Dunno," replied Bob, kicking off his shoes. "He said he'd come if he could."

"He ought to be able to come. He lives close enough to this place."

"Ezra Stapleton, his uncle, might take it into his head to prevent him. He's mean enough to do most anything to Jack."

"Why should he want to prevent him coming in swimming? Isn't it the best thing for a fellow's health, especially when he's been working all day in the fields, like Jack is doing these days?"

"Don't ask me why Ezra Stapleton would want to prevent him coming in swimming, or doing anything else. All I know is that he has a standing grouch against Jack, and it seems to do him good to make his nephew as miserable as he can."

"I've heard that he and Jack are not pulling very well

of late, but I don't see why that should prevent Granger coming in swimming."

"Well, if he comes he'll be here, and if he don't come he won't be here. That's all I can tell you about it," replied Bob.

Two minutes later every boy in the bunch was disporting himself in the water.

Nothing but a lot of heads moving this way or that, or a splashing arm, was to be seen on the surface.

Anybody out of sight on the bluff above would have known they were there from the shouts and cries that came up from the inlet.

After swimming about for a quarter of an hour the boys climbed out on the scow, which, as the tide was low, was wholly exposed, and perched themselves about in all sorts of attitudes.

At this moment two newcomers appeared on the scene, each carrying a small hand-satchel.

These were Herbert Gleason, the best-dressed boy in the village—and the most important one, in his own estimation—and his city cousin, George Paul.

"Here come the dudes," grinned Will Watson, pointing them out to his companions.

"What have they got in those satchels?" asked Joe Converse.

"Bathing-suits, I'll bet," said Bob Munson.

Gleason and Paul made their way down a path to the shore, went to a big rock, took their suits out of their grips, and began to undress.

The other boys watched them with some curiosity, for though Herbert associated with them for companionship sake, he always gave them to understand by his manner that they were not in his class, and the boys rather resented his patronizing ways.

They were pretty loud-looking suits that Herbert and his cousin encased themselves in after getting out of their regular garments.

They were made of alternate stripes of red and white flannel, and they looked pretty gay.

"You ought to be able to hear those suits all the way to Martha's Vineyard," chuckled Bob Munson.

"Oh, you're jealous, Bob," laughed Tom Hitchcock.

"Bet you a quarter that we don't get an introduction to that city chap," said Bob.

Herbert and George Paul stood at the water's edge for some moments in order that the other boys might get a good look at their swimming suits, and then they went in.

"You can't say those two chaps aren't in the swim," said Will Watson, evidently intending the remark as a joke.

Herbert was only an indifferent swimmer, but his cousin soon demonstrated that he was a crackerjack, and the rest of the boys were lost in admiration over his performances.

"That fellow can swim circles around some of us," said Joe Converse, rather enviously.



"He's all to the good," replied Tom Hitchcock, wagging his head sagaciously.

"There's one of us he can't swim circles around, I'll bet a hat, and that is Jack Granger."

"Here comes Jack now," shouted Will Watson.

"Hi, hi, Jack, we've been waiting for you," cried Bob, getting up and waving his arms.

Then he took a header, and as if that was a signal for the others, a dozen splashes announced that all the boys were in the water once more.

By the time Jack was undressed and ready to go in, the whole bunch was up on the scow once more, waiting for him to join them.

"Who's that yonder?" he asked Bob, noticing the heads of Herbert and his cousin swimming about by themselves.

"Herbert Gleason and some city chap that's staying with him. They haven't been near us since they came here. You ought to see their swimming suits. They're peaches for color. Put you in mind of a sunset out on the Sound."

"One of them is a dandy swimmer, I can see," said Jack, "and that, I know, isn't Gleason."

"You can bet your life it isn't. Herbert can't swim worth sour apples, but the other fellow—well, say, he's almost as good as you."

"He may be better."

"No; I'm ready to bet my money on you."

"All right; have it your way. I'll give you four yards flying start, and race you out to that stake," said Jack.

"I'm your huckleberry, though I guess you'll beat me all right," replied Bob.

Bob was the next best swimmer to Jack, and the boys hailed the race with much enthusiasm.

Munson took a long sliding dive that brought him up about five yards away, and as he struck out for the stake Jack went in pursuit with regular and powerful strokes that pulled his body through the water like a fish.

Bob was within a yard of the goal when Jack glided past him and seized the pole with one hand, kicking the water in his friend's face with his feet.

"I knew you'd beat me," puffed Bob, grabbing the pole himself.

"You didn't know it. You only thought so. I only won by an eye-lash, anyway," returned Jack.

"Here come the rest of the bunch," said Bob.

"Let 'em come."

With Will Watson in the lead, and Tom Hitchcock a close second, the others were rapidly approaching the pole.

As they came up Jack let go of the pole, and dived.

He stayed under a long time—so long, in fact, that his companions began to look a bit anxious.

When he came up he was more than thirty feet away, and close to George Paul, Herbert's cousin.

"You're a fine swimmer," said Paul, pleasantly, for he recognized Jack as the boy who had won the handicap race to the pole.

"Thanks. I'm pretty fair. You seem to be an expert yourself."

"I'll allow that I ain't bad at it. What's your name?"

"Jack Granger."

"Mine is George Paul. Do you belong to one of the farms around here?"

"Yes, the Stapleton farm. My uncle owns it."

"I'm glad to know you, and hope I'll see more of you. I'd like to join you fellows, but my cousin doesn't care to do so for some reason."

"Is Herbert Gleason your cousin?" asked Jack.

"Yes, on my mother's side. By the way, Granger, I'd like to have a brush with you from here to that scow, if you're willing."

"I'll go you."

"Suppose I give the word?" said Paul.

"All right."

"I'll count one, two, three, go! Understand?"

"I'm on."

At the word "Go!" both started off together, and it was a pretty sight to see them flash through the water, neck and neck.

As soon as the other lads saw what was in the wind they set up shouts of glee, and began to encourage Jack to do his best.

All but Bob had returned to the scow, and he started for it as soon as he saw the race in progress.

"Go it, Jack!" shouted Will Watson, dancing about on the edge of the scow like a monkey on a hot stove. "Put in your best licks."

"Get a hustle on, Granger!" roared Tom Hitchcock. "Whoop her up!"

"Come now, Jack, what's the matter with you?" howled Joe Converse. "You haven't gained an inch."

The rest of the crowd yelped and cheered as the swimmers came on head to head as before.

As for Herbert Gleason, he was disgusted with his cousin for condescending to race with a common farm-hand, as he regarded Jack Granger.

"I'm astonished at him," he muttered discontentedly, as he stood on the shore a short distance away, and regarded the race with a disapproving eye.

"It's going to be a dead heat as sure as you live," said Will Watson. "Jack can't beat him to save his life."

"But look how long Granger was under water," put in Hitchcock. "That chap has the advantage of him."

Whether George Paul had any particular advantage or not in the race, certain it is that both he and Jack slapped their right hands on the end of the scow together.

"Shake," said Paul, in a friendly way, extending his hand, which Jack took. "There doesn't seem to be much difference between us. I did my best and couldn't beat you."

"Same here," laughed Jack. "We're two of a kind in the water, I guess. Come up on the scow and I'll introduce you to the fellows."

George Paul was soon nodding to and shaking hands



with the crowd, while Herbert squatted down on the shore, more disgusted than ever.

At this moment Bob Munson reached the scow, and was introduced to the stranger.

After a short chat Paul remarked that he guessed he'd have to go back to his cousin, as Gleason looked lonesome.

The boys voted him the right sort of chap as they began to put on their clothes, preparatory to going home.

"You stayed a long time under water that time you dived, Jack," said Bob, as they walked up the bluff together. "What did you do it for?"

"What did I do it for? Because I made a discovery."

"A discovery!" exclaimed Bob.

"Yes, I found something."

"What did you find?"

"The deck of a big ship."

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE WRECK OF THE CALIOPE.

"The deck of a big ship!" repeated Bob, with a puzzled look.

"Yes," nodded Jack. "The rest of the ship is imbedded in the soft mud."

"How do you know it is a big ship?"

"By her width of beam."

"It's funny that a big ship should have sunk in the inlet, and lost her masts, and nobody be any the wiser."

"That depends."

"On what?"

"When and under what conditions the ship went down."

"What should bring a big ship into the inlet?"

"A storm might bring it there for one thing, if the wind blew in the right direction at the time."

"That's so," admitted Bob. "But I never heard of any ship being blown into the inlet and then going to the bottom."

"Lots of things have happened in this world that you haven't heard about."

"That's true enough. Same in your case."

"Didn't you ever hear the story of the British ship that was chased into Vineyard Sound by one of our cruisers about the close of the war of 1812?"

"Do you mean the Caliope? My father told me about her some years ago. She was an armed craft, a kind of privateer, I believe, that was discovered somewhere between Block Island and Martha's Vineyard one dark night by the gun-brig Decatur. The brig chased her into Vineyard's Sound and overhauled her just off this shore. She put up a game fight, but would certainly have been captured only that a thick fog came up at the critical moment, and the Decatur lost her. Next morning a lot of wreckage and a shattered boat with the name Caliope

was discovered along the shore of the inlet, from which indications it was believed that the vessel had sunk."

"You've got it down fine, Bob. That's the vessel I'm talking about."

"Well, what about her?"

"I'm certain that I stood on her deck when I went under water that time."

"What makes you think so?" asked Bob, with undisguised interest.

"Because I noticed two old-fashioned cannon pointing through the remains of a bulwark, in which were evidences of shot holes."

"You don't say!" cried Bob, in some excitement.

"And I saw an old-style musket and a boarding-pike jammed against the base of the bulwark by one of the guns."

"We must get them," said Bob. "They'll be great curiosities."

"I'd rather get something else."

"What's that?"

"The treasure that's in the vessel's cabin."

"What treasure?" asked Bob, with bulging eyes.

"Two hundred and fifty thousand dollars in English sovereigns."

"Two hundred and fifty thou—say, what are you talking about, anyway, Jack?"

"I'm talking about the chest of money in that vessel's cabin."

"How do you know there's any money in her cabin?"

"If that's the remains of the British ship Caliope that was chased into the Sound by the American brig Decatur, in the early spring of 1815, there's a box of gold sovereigns worth a quarter of a million in her cabin, if it still exists, or in the mud, if it doesn't."

"Supposing that it is the ship Caliope that was chased into the inlet by the Decatur, how could you know that there was a treasure box in her cabin?"

"I know it by an official account I saw printed in a book of English marine disasters. The Caliope was known to have escaped from the Decatur, but was believed to have afterward foundered somewhere along the coast, or at sea, from the supposed effect of shot-holes between wind and water received during the action. At any rate, she never reached any port, nor were her officers or crew heard from."

"It seems to me that if she ran into the inlet, and then went down, that it would have been an easy matter for everybody on board to reach shore."

"That's the only thing that puzzles me," admitted Jack. "The only way I can account for it is that owing to the dense fog the people aboard of her had no idea where they were, and in the confusion of her going down that they took to the boats and rowed out into Nantucket Sound, when, if they had only known, they had a shore within fifty yards of them on every side but the direction they had come."



"Even so, I should think they might have been picked up next day."

"The fact that they were never picked up shows that they were lost."

"Did the official account say that the Caliope had a treasure chest in her cabin?"

"It did. That's how I happened to learn about it."

"And if that vessel you located in the inlet a little while ago is the Caliope you think the money must be there?"

"I don't see why it wouldn't be. It was probably stowed in an iron chest, and I take it that chest is now at the bottom of the inlet."

Bob was silent for a moment or two.

"Supposing it is there, how can it be got at?"

"That's for you and I, Bob, to figure out. I think it's worth while."

"A quarter of a million, you say?"

"That's the amount given in the account."

"Gee whiz! Suppose we were so fortunate as to get hold of all that money—we would be rich boys," said Bob, enthusiastically

"We'd be pretty well off."

"Do you think of trying for it?"

"I do."

"How are you going to do it? Dive for it?"

"You mean like I did this afternoon? That's sheer nonsense. The only way to find out if the treasure chest is there is to first examine the wreck with the aid of a diver's outfit. To purchase or lease such an outfit will cost money. I haven't any just now, and I don't believe that you have a superabundance of funds. So the treasure will have to remain at the bottom of the inlet for the present. Even if we had the funds we'd have to learn how to use the outfit. I propose to learn how when the time comes. There's one satisfaction, at any rate, the money is in gold coin, and no amount of sea water will hurt it any."

"I guess it'll be a long time before we get any nearer that money than we are now," said Bob, with a wry look. "Somebody else may get on to the fact that it's there, and get ahead of us."

"I hope not," replied Jack. "As that wreck has lain there unnoticed for over eighty years, I think it stands a good chance of evading attention for a while longer. At any rate, we can't do anything toward recovering the money at present. Of course, you want to keep your mouth shut about what I have told you. If the news got abroad that a wreck, suspected to be the Caliope, lay at the bottom of the inlet, you'd see a diving outfit at work there in a very short time; then it would be good-by to the treasure chest as far as we were concerned."

"Oh, I won't say a word about it," assured Bob. "I'm not such a fool."

"That's right. A still tongue is the sign of a wise head, my aunt says. We will talk this matter over again, and maybe some day we'll find the way to get at that treasure and make ourselves rich. Good-night."

"Good-night, Jack," and the boys separated.

## CHAPTER IV.

### WHAT JACK FOUND IN THE FIELD.

Jack found his supper waiting for him in the oven, as he expected, and he ate it at the kitchen table.

He had almost finished it when Ezra Stapleton, a strapping man of nearly six feet, with a bunch of grizzly beard on his chin, came in from the barnyard.

He stopped and looked at the boy with a forbidding countenance.

"Well, where have you been?" he asked, harshly.

"Swimming," replied Jack, in a conciliatory tone.

"Who told you that you could go swimmin'?" demanded his uncle.

"Nobody," answered the boy, eyeing his relative askance, and mentally calculating the distance that lay between him and the door.

"I suppose you think that you can do as you please around this place because your aunt is so soft toward you, eh?" said Mr. Stapleton, disagreeably.

"No, sir. I didn't go to the inlet until I had finished up all the chores."

"You drove the cows home, didn't you?" asked his uncle, sarcastically.

"No, sir. Andy attended to that."

"I know he did. But it was your place to do it. He has somethin' else to do."

"Andy said he'd do it."

"I don't care what he said. I won't have him attendin' to your business, d'ye understand?"

Jack made no reply, which seemed to anger Mr. Stapleton.

"Why don't you answer me, you whelp?" he roared.

"You have no right to call me such a name as that," flashed Jack.

"Oh, I hain't, eh? By the Lord Harry, things are comin' to a pretty pass when a young cub like you starts in to tell me what I should or should not do. What you want is a good lickin' with a rawhide, and I'm goin' to give it to you this minute."

He made a swoop at the boy, but Jack slid under the table and eluded him, coming up at the opposite end.

Mr. Stapleton, who was not any too sober, made a miscalculation in his eagerness to grab Jack, and fell over the chair just vacated by the boy.

He came down with a crash on the floor, carrying the chair and the table with its small collection of dishes, with him.

To make the matter worse, he struck his forehead against a tin bucket, and cut a nasty gash that bled freely.

Jack took advantage of the accident to reach the kitchen door, where he stood aghast when he saw his uncle sit up with a gory countenance amid the wreckage.

The noise naturally attracted the attention of Mrs.



Stapleton, who was sewing in the next room, and she came running to the spot.

"Why, Ezra, what is the matter?" she exclaimed in dismay. "What have you been doing to yourself?"

Mr. Stapleton paid no attention to her, but glared around in search of the boy he fully intended to horsewhip for what he considered his insolence.

"I suppose it's my fault, Aunt Mary," said Jack, from the doorway. "Mr. Stapleton," the boy never called the man uncle, "said he was going to whip me with a rawhide. I was finishing my supper at the table, and he made a grab at me. I slipped out of his reach, and he fell over the chair and pulled the table down with him."

Jack's explanation drew his uncle's eyes in his direction, and the man struggled to get up, muttering incoherent expressions of anger.

Mrs. Stapleton was a small woman, but she was not afraid of her big husband.

In her youth she had been very spunky, and her decided ways had enabled her to obtain a considerable influence over her husband, which, since he had turned over a crooked leaf, he was not able to wholly shake off.

While it was physically possible for him to have knocked her into the middle of next week, so to speak, with one hand, he entertained a certain amount of respect for her convictions and attitude, and never courted a clash with her.

If he swore in her presence it was under his breath, and the idea of laying a finger on her in anger never occurred to him.

Mrs. Stapleton went to her husband and assisted him to his feet, and then planted herself between him and her nephew.

Ezra looked at her, and glared at the boy, but made no effort to reach him.

"Go and wash your face, Ezra," she said. "You've cut your forehead."

Mechanically he put his hand to his temple, and then took it away smeared with his blood.

His lips moved, but no sound came forth.

The look he cast at Jack, however, told the character of his thoughts.

He stood for a moment hesitating in the middle of the floor, then he went to the sink, and, turning some water from a bucket into a tin pan, laved his face.

Mrs. Stapleton made a significant gesture toward her nephew, and Jack vanished.

Going to the barn, the boy found Andy McPike finishing his last duties for the night.

"You look excited, Jack. What's the matter?" asked Andy, a strapping young fellow of twenty-two.

"Just had a scrap with Mr. Stapleton."

"That's gettin' to be an every-day occurrence," grinned the farmhand. "What's the cause this time?"

"He kicked because I went swimming this evening."

"Oh, he did? You had a right to go, didn't you?"

"I think I had."

"Of course you had. He's gettin' to be a howlin' terror of late."

"It's the tavern and the loafers he meets there and at Mr. Grimsby's store that's making him so."

"I believe you. He's altogether a different man to what he was a couple of years ago."

"Are you going to leave the farm, Andy?" asked Jack, a bit wistfully.

"I haven't decided. I have an offer from Farmer Atwood, who wants me bad. I would have no trouble gettin' my wages there. Still, I've been here eight years, ever since I was a boy, and I'm bound to say that I like your aunt first-class."

"And you like me, too, don't you, Andy?"

"Sure I do. I'd hate to part company with you. But I'm gettin' tired of Mr. Stapleton. It riles me to see the way he handles you without gloves, when you're worth your weight in gold about the place. I've often wondered why you didn't run off after one of your rackets. I should if I'd been in your shoes."

"Well, you know why I don't."

"Yes. It's on your aunt's account. She's the best friend you've got, and you do right to stand by her. Well, how did your scrap turn out?"

"Mr. Stapleton got the worst of it this time, but I'm afraid he'll try to get square with me for it."

Jack told Andy what occurred in the kitchen, and the hired man thought Ezra Stapleton got nothing more than he deserved.

"If he attempts to horsewhip you, Jack, he'll have me to reckon with," said Andy, shaking his head determinedly. "He's bigger and maybe stronger than me, but just the same he'll find out somethin' he won't like if he strikes you with anythin' harder than his hand."

"You mustn't get yourself into trouble on my account, Andy," objected Jack.

"Don't you worry about me. I can take care of myself."

"If you have a scrap with Mr. Stapleton you'll have to leave the farm, anyway."

Andy shrugged his shoulders, locked the barn door, and he and Jack returned to the house.

The kitchen was empty, the fire banked in the stove for the morning, and all evidences of the recent trouble removed.

Andy locked and barred the door, and the two went upstairs together.

Both were up before sunrise attending to their duties. At seven o'clock they went into the house for breakfast. Mr. Stapleton was at the table.

He scowled at Jack, which showed that he hadn't forgotten the unpleasant occurrence of the evening before.

"We're goin' to take some of the stone out of the field on the bluff this mornin'," he said, breaking his silence for the first time when the meal was nearly over. "I'm goin' to repair the fence along the road."

Jack thought it was about time the fence was repaired,



but considered it should have been done when work about the farm was slack.

"You'll hitch the gray mare to the waggin, Andy," Mr. Stapleton continued, "and take Jack with you. I'll be along to see that you do things right."

"I wonder what's started him to fix up the fence at this time," said Andy, as he and Jack walked toward the barn.

"Don't ask me, Andy. It's a freak he's taken, I guess."

"If he continues to loaf the afternoons in the village all summer he'll have to hire another hand next month, or take the risk of losin' half his hay."

"Aunt gave him a talking to the other night, but it doesn't seem to have done much good. The village influence has got too strong a hold over him."

"I'd like to take those tavern chaps and give 'em a good duckin' in the nearest horse pond," said Andy. "I think they need a coolin' off."

They hitched the gray mare to the stout wagon, and Andy drove the team into the long, narrow field that bordered on the bluff overlooking the inlet.

This field had never been cultivated, for it was too rocky for raising anything but weeds and wild flowers.

They began to fill the wagon with stones suitable for repairing the road fence.

By the time the wagon was nearly full Mr. Stapleton appeared on the scene.

He was in his shirt sleeves, with an old straw hat on his head, and his pants stuck into the tops of his boots.

He watched them while they finished loading.

"You stay here and get a pile of stones ready for the next load," he said to Jack.

He motioned Andy to get up on the seat, then he followed, took up the reins, and drove into the lane.

Jack, left to himself, obeyed orders, and started in to gather a pile of stones.

He worked steadily for half an hour, and by that time had accumulated quite a lot of material for the second load.

Then he sat on a rock deeply imbedded in the soil to take a brief rest, for the sun was hot and there wasn't a breath of air stirring.

At his feet lay another rock, not very large.

The rains of the preceding spring had partially undermined it on the side nearest to Jack, leaving a crevice in the ground.

The morning sun shining down into this glistened upon some metallic substance that lay under the stone.

"I wonder what that is?" thought Jack.

His curiosity was excited, so he knelt down and peered into the crevice.

"It looks like a box," he muttered. "I'm going to pull that stone up if I can."

A small claw-hammer lay close by, which he had taken out of the wagon to loosen the stones with.

With the help of this he succeeded in raising the rock from its bed and pushing it to one side.

Then he looked into the hole.

There lay a rusty oblong jappanned tin box.

"I wonder what's in it?" Jack asked himself. "Gee! It's heavy!" he muttered as he took hold of the handle and lifted it out.

Tilting it up he fancied he heard a jingling sound.

"I'll find out what's in it in a couple of shakes," he said, grabbing the hammer and beating the tin cover in just above the lock.

The lock presently snapped, and the cover flew open.

"Great Christopher!" exclaimed the boy, devouring his find with bulging eyes.

The tin box appeared to be full of tarnished twenty-dollar gold pieces.

## CHAPTER V.

### CUT OFF BY THE TIDE.

"Gee! What a find!" exclaimed Jack, after his first feeling of astonishment had subsided. "There must be more'n a thousand dollars here."

He fingered the money over, and as the brighter gold pieces underneath came to the surface they sparkled gayly in the sunshine.

"My gracious!" breathed the boy, "this little unproductive acre of ground of mine has turned up trumps. This is what I call a golden crop."

In order to explain Jack's remark we will say that this particular part of the Stapleton farm never had belonged to his Uncle Ezra.

The man who sold the farm to Mr. Stapleton retained the title to this strip of rocky ground because he wanted to make use of the rock for a certain purpose he had in mind at the time, and as it was unproductive, and he made an allowance on the price of the whole land to make up for it, Mr. Stapleton agreed to purchase the farm without this section, which amounted in all to only about an acre.

The man subsequently decided that he didn't want the stone, and he proposed to Mr. Stapleton that he pay him the amount he had allowed and take the land.

Ezra refused to do it, knowing the ground was useless to the man, and offered him a mere pittance for the strip.

The owner, understanding Mr. Stapleton's object, was so angry that he called the deal off, which didn't particularly worry Ezra, as he had no use for the ground except as a kind of pasture, and it was not of much use even for that purpose.

Ten years passed away, and the man died.

When his will was read it was found that he had left this acre of ground to young Jack Granger, then twelve years old, to whom he had taken a fancy.

Ezra Stapleton laughed when the news was communicated to him, and after that he turned his cattle in there



whenever he felt disposed to do so, and looked upon the ground as practically his own.

Jack looked lovingly at the box of gold coin, and congratulated himself on the fact that he had suddenly become a rich boy.

He was so absorbed in the contemplation of his newly acquired wealth that he didn't see nor hear the return of the wagon.

Ezra Stapleton's sharp eyes had seen him loafing at his work, as he regarded it, half way up the lane, and he was madder than a hornet.

When the wagon entered the field and still Jack stirred not, Mr. Stapleton grabbed his stout horsewhip, descended from the seat, and started for the boy, fully intending to give him a good taste of the lash.

The first knowledge Jack had that he was not alone was when the farmer gave him a vicious swipe on the leg with the whip.

The lash cut through to the skin, and the boy sprang to his feet with a cry of pain.

"Loafin', are you, blast your hide!" roared Mr. Stapleton. "I'll teach you to waste my time, you young scamp!"

He was about to repeat the blow when his gaze lighted on the box of money.

He stopped with whip upraised, rooted to the spot with amazement. For the moment he thought he must be dreaming.

Then he advanced a step and looked closer.

It was a tin box filled with money, beyond a doubt.

He saw the hole and the overturned stone, and instantly he comprehended that his nephew had accidentally unearthed this treasure trove.

The sight of the golden coins aroused all the cupidity in Ezra Stapleton's nature.

Swinging aloft the heavy whip handle, he rushed upon the boy.

Jack raised his arm to protect himself.

"Git!" roared the farmer, pointing to the lane.

Despite the threatening attitude of his uncle, Jack had no idea of relinquishing possession of his golden discovery, which by every right belonged to him.

"That belongs to me," he replied sturdily.

"Git!" repeated Mr. Stapleton, swinging the butt of his whip so near the boy's head that Jack had to spring aside to save himself.

"No, I won't go—not without my property," replied the plucky lad.

"You won't, eh?" snarled his uncle furiously. "Then I'll kill you!"

He raised his whip in the air again, intending to strike Jack to the ground, when it was suddenly snatched from his grasp by Andy McPike, who, at the first sign of hostilities, had sprung from the wagon and hastened to Granger's rescue.

The farmer turned wrathfully on his farm-hand and struck at him with his fist, the blow, however, falling short.

Andy threw the whip far from him, and yelled to Jack to run.

Jack thought the advice good under the circumstances, and, grabbing up the heavy tin box in his arms, he started, not for the house, but for the upper end of his own strip of ground, where he meant to hide his property among the rocks until he found a chance to remove it to some more secure place where his uncle couldn't find it.

He knew that it would hardly be safe in the house, even in his aunt's possession, for Ezra Stapleton would move heaven and earth to discover where it was hidden.

He didn't look back as he fled along the uneven ground.

Had he done so he would have seen his uncle and Andy McPike engaged in a hand-to-hand conflict that threatened dire results to one or both of them.

Jack soon was out of sight of the wagon and the combatants, for the boulders were large in many places, especially as he neared the end of the point where the farm overlooked Vineyard Sound.

Finally, out of breath and dripping with perspiration, he came to a stop, and, for the first time, looked back for any signs of pursuit on the part of his uncle.

He saw none, and congratulated himself over the fact that he had given Mr. Stapleton the slip.

Then he looked about him for a hiding-place for the box and its precious contents.

An old dead tree pointed its withered trunk toward the sky near the edge of the bluff.

Its roots were solidly imbedded in a little patch of earth among a nest of boulders.

The tree was hollow, with a small opening at its base.

"I think that will make a first-class hiding-place for the treasure," he said to himself, feeling around inside the withered trunk. "No one ever comes here, for they couldn't reach this spot except across the farm, and there's nothing to attract one but a view of the sound, and that can be had elsewhere. Yes, I'll trust it here, for a while, at any rate. In fact, I can't very well help myself."

So he shoved the box into the tree and concealed the opening by rolling two good-sized stones against it in such a way that they looked natural.

The shore of the inlet extended around the point in the shape of a smooth patch of beach, that was entirely covered at high tide.

There was a break, however, in this beach almost directly under the dead tree, which was not particularly noticeable until the tide began to run in, when the beach was quickly separated from the inlet by an arm of water.

When Jack turned away from the tree he stood for a moment looking out over the glistening surface of the Sound that was being stirred into life and motion by the breeze that had just sprung up.

Finally he casually glanced down at the beach below.

The tide was coming in, and the patch of hard white sand on which the water was beginning to encroach was already cut off from the inlet.

A dash of color among the rocks caught his eye, and



to his surprise and consternation he saw a girl seated on a boulder reading a book in blissful unconsciousness of her peril.

He gave a shout to attract her attention.

She glanced up in surprise at the hail, and Jack's heart went cold as he recognized Grace Munson.

## CHAPTER VI.

### IN DESPERATE STRAITS.

The recognition was mutual, and Grace, who had been particularly attracted to Jack since they first became acquainted, smiled up at him and waved her book.

"What are you doing up there, Jack?" she asked.

But the boy, standing forty feet above her, made no reply.

He was casting his eyes along the face of the bluff, wondering how he could extricate the girl from her dangerous predicament.

"What are you looking at, Jack?" she said, not understanding his actions.

"Don't get frightened, Grace, but the tide is coming in and you are cut off from the inlet," he answered.

His words woke Grace up to a sense of her peril, and looking toward the entrance of the inlet she saw, to her terror, that she could not return the way she had come.

"Save me, Jack, save me!" she cried, in frightened accents.

"I'll save you somehow, never fear," he replied, reassuringly.

"You can't come down, nor can I climb up. Oh, dear, I'll be drowned when the water comes in."

"No, you won't. Climb up on the rocks as far as you can go and sit there until I can run to our barn and get a rope."

"Oh, don't go away and leave me here alone," she wailed.

"I must. There is no way to reach you except with a rope. Keep up your courage until I come back."

Without waiting to hear the girl's reply, he turned around and sped back toward the farmhouse.

As he leaped the fence into the barnyard he saw Ezra Stapleton coming from the stone field.

He looked like a wreck, for his face was puffed out and bleeding.

As soon as he saw the boy he started for him.

Jack saw him coming, and made quick time for the barn.

He knew where a coil of stout rope hung from a peg in the wall, and he seized it, threw it across his shoulder, and started to get out before his uncle blocked his way.

He was a trifle too late, for before he could reach the door Mr. Stapleton's six feet of bone and flesh filled the opening.

"Where's that box, you little villain. Tell me at once or I'll be the death of you."

"Leave me alone," cried Jack, excitedly. "I must get back to the point of the bluff at once or Grace Munson will be drowned. She's on the beach below, cut off by the tide."

His words made no impression at all on the farmer.

All his thoughts were centered on getting possession of that box of money, and he meant to get it somehow.

"Tell me where you've hidden that box, and I'll let you go," he said.

"Let me leave the barn, I tell you," cried Jack, in a fever of anxious impatience. "Do you want that girl to drown?"

"What do I care about the girl? I want that box of money."

"You'll never get it," replied Jack, desperately.

"We'll see about that," replied Ezra, grimly, advancing on the boy.

Perceiving that a collision with his uncle was imminent, and knowing that if Mr. Stapleton got hold of him he would not be able to get away to Grace's rescue, he looked around for some weapon with which to defend himself.

A three-pronged fork, used for tossing hay and manure, stood against the wall within reach of his hand.

He grabbed it up and presented the points toward his uncle.

"If you don't leave me alone," he cried resolutely, "I'll pin you against the wall with this fork."

"You'll do what?" roared his uncle, furiously.

"I'll stick you, and, by Christopher, I mean what I say."

Jack lunged at Mr. Stapleton in such a threatening way that Ezra started back with an oath of astonishment and some trepidation.

"Get away from that door, do you hear?" cried the boy, making another demonstration with the pitchfork.

The prongs actually came against the farmer's chest.

"Are you crazy?" he demanded, retreating before the lad's resolute front, backed by the sharp steel prongs.

"Yes, I'm crazy," retorted Jack, making a final thrust that completely demoralized the farmer, and caused him to jump backward on the floor of the barn.

Taking instant advantage of his chance, Jack threw down the fork, sprang out of the door, and ran for the point.

He reached the dead tree out of breath, and looked down at the patch of beach.

It was entirely covered with the water by this time, while the terrified girl was perched on a rock a few feet above the flow of the tide.

"Here I am, Grace," said Jack, as he unshipped the coil of rope from his back.

Grace gave a little cry of joy at seeing him once more, and pointed shudderingly at the fast-rising water.

"I'll have you out of there in a few minutes," said



Jack, beginning to tie one end of the rope around the trunk of the tree.

She watched his motions anxiously.

After testing the hold of the rope on the tree by pulling on it he threw the balance of the coil down to the girl.

Then, with the agility of a monkey, he swung off the bluff and, gliding down the line, stood by her side.

"Put your arms around my neck, Grace, and hold on for your life while I shin up the rope."

The girl obeyed, and then Jack grasped the rope and prepared to mount to the top of the bluff.

At that moment the face of Ezra Stapleton appeared alongside the tree above.

"So you're down there, are you," he laughed sardonically. "I guess I've got you where I want you, you ungrateful cub. Tell me where you've hidden that box of money or I'll cut the rope and let you stay there."

"Cut the rope!" cried Jack. "Can't you see that Grace Munson is down here, too, and that I'm trying to save her?"

"I don't care who's down there. I want that money, and I'm goin' to have it, or you're goin' to suffer the consequences."

"For heaven's sake, Uncle Stapleton, don't interfere with me now, and I'll give you a part of the money."

"No, you won't. You'll give it all to me. I'm your guardeen, and it's my duty to take charge of all that belongs to you. Where is it? Tell me or I'll slash the rope," and the farmer flashed out his jack-knife and held it against the rope.

Jack was getting desperate.

The water was already swirling about the rocks within a few inches of their feet, and the prospect was growing more hazardous every minute.

Ezra Stapleton clearly held the key to the situation, and he was ugly enough at that moment to push matters to the cracking point.

Jack hated to reveal the hiding place of the money-box after all the trouble he had been to in securing it, for he knew that that would be the last he ever would see of the gold.

And yet the life of Grace Munson was more precious by far than the contents of that box.

For himself he was not particularly concerned.

The water was comparatively calm, and he could swim like a fish.

If Grace was only out of danger he could laugh at his uncle's threat.

An idea struck him how to get out of his dilemma.

"Let go of my neck, Grace," he said.

The girl obeyed.

Then he tied the end of the rope securely around her waist.

"Haul her up, Uncle Stapleton."

"Tell me where you've hidden the box and I'll do it," said the foxy farmer.

"I won't tell you a thing till you pull her up," replied Jack firmly.

"Then she don't come up."

"Do you want to be responsible for her death?" pleaded Jack.

"I didn't put her down there, so I ain't responsible for nothin'," answered Mr. Stapleton. "If you're so anxious to get her up here tell me where you put the box, and up she comes."

With the water now splashing about their shoes Jack was more desperate than ever.

"Will you pull her up right away if I tell you?"

"Yes."

"Before you look for the box?"

"I'll agree to that."

"The box is hidden in——"

Something hard struck against Jack's leg at that moment, and he turned to see what it was.

He uttered a yell of delight, for the object was a small rowboat.

## CHAPTER VII.

### A DISHEARTENING DISCOVERY.

Extending his foot over the gunwale of the boat, Jack cast the rope loose from Grace's waist, and then swung her into the little craft, following her himself.

A howl of disappointment floated down from the farmer on the summit of the bluff, who saw that he was euchered at the moment when things were apparently coming his way.

As Jack seized the pair of oars lying across the seats he gazed triumphantly up at his discomfitted relative.

"I'll skin you alive when I catch you!" roared Ezra Stapleton, shaking his fist at his nephew.

Jack made no reply, but rowed around the point and into the inlet.

Grace seemed bewildered by the sudden transition from imminent peril to actual safety, as well as by the hostile attitude shown to them by Mr. Stapleton.

"Oh, Jack, what is the matter with your uncle? He couldn't have meant to leave us on the rocks to be washed off by the water."

"No," replied the boy, who wished to shield his aunt's husband from the consequences of his violent conduct involving the girl's safety, "he was just trying to bring me to terms."

"About what? He spoke about a hidden box of money. What did he mean?"

"I'll tell you if you promise not to say a word about it, even to Bob."

"I'll promise, of course."

"I found a tin box full of twenty-dollar gold pieces about an hour ago on that acre of ground willed to me by Matthew Truesdale."



"You did!" exclaimed Grace, in astonishment.

"Yes. Mr. Stapleton saw my find and wanted to appropriate it to his own use. I objected, because I consider the money belongs to me, as I discovered it on my own property. What he would have done to me in the field I can't say—he looked mad enough to kill me—if Andy McPike hadn't interfered, giving me the chance to run off with the box. I hid it in a safe place, and now Mr. Stapleton seems determined to make me tell him where I put it. This I am determined not to do if I can possibly help myself."

"How much money did you find?"

"I didn't count it; but I am sure there must be more than a thousand dollars."

"I'm so glad you were so fortunate, Jack," said Grace, earnestly.

"Thank you, Grace. I am sure you are my friend."

"Of course I am. And I want you to know that I am very grateful to you for saving me from being drowned on the point."

"I don't think you would actually have been drowned there if you had even been alone as long as you kept your wits about you. The tide would scarcely have risen higher than your knees while you stood on that rock, and as the water was calm you ought not to have been washed off."

"Even if I was as fortunate as you say I should have been obliged to stand in the water for hours before the tide went down. Just think how frightened and uncomfortable I would have been. You saved me from all that, and I shan't forget what you've done for me as long as I live."

"I am very glad I was able to render you a service, Grace," replied Jack, earnestly. "I would do anything in the world for you, because you're Bob's sister, and because—well, because I like you."

"And I like you, too, Jack," with a little blush. "I always have, and I shall like you a hundred times more after this."

Her words made the boy very happy.

She was a pretty girl, with sapphire-blue eyes and golden hair, a willowy figure, and a manner distinctly charming.

She never made any secret of her preference for Jack's society, and the boy always felt flattered by her friendly attitude.

The pleasure of having her all by himself in a boat that sunshiny morning was a pleasure he had not anticipated enjoying.

As he rowed up the inlet he forgot for the time being the unpleasant situation he was up against on the farm, the outcome of which was problematical.

"Isn't it funny that this boat came along just when we needed it?" said Grace at length, after a short silence.

"It was mighty lucky for both of us, especially for me, as it pulled me out of a tight corner. I was just about to reveal the hiding-place of that box to Mr. Stapleton when the gunwale of this boat struck me on the leg. By the

way, Grace, what brought you away out on the point this morning?"

"I was in the humor for taking a long walk, and it occurred to me that it would be delightful to sit out there facing the Sound and read a new book I got yesterday from the village library."

"Surely you knew that the point is a dangerous place as soon as the tide begins to rise."

"Yes, I've heard about it often enough, but I got so interested in the book that I forgot all about the flight of time. When I tell mother what nearly happened to me I guess I'll get a good scolding."

"Well, you'll do me one favor, won't you?" he asked her.

"A hundred if you want, Jack. What is it?"

"Don't say a word about Mr. Stapleton. If his actions on the bluff got around folks would talk. I have no doubt but your father would be very angry to think that my uncle would hesitate for a moment to pull you out of a dangerous predicament, when it was within his power to do so, or interfere with my efforts to rescue you."

"I won't mention him at all, Jack," Grace assured him.

"Thank you."

"It's a lovely day on the water, isn't it?" she said, after another pause.

"It is," he answered. "I'm afraid I shall have a run-in with Mr. Stapleton when I get back," he added, as the thought recurred to him.

"Oh, I hope not," replied Grace, with a look of concern.

"He's bound to keep at me about that box of money. He is rather short of funds because he hasn't attended to the farm as he should have for over a year. Those twenty-dollar gold pieces would put him on his feet again. If I could trust him at all, and that he would put the money to good use for the actual benefit of himself and my aunt, I wouldn't mind letting him have half of my find; but I feel sure he would only squander the money to no good purpose. That's why I don't mean to let him have any. I intend to use it to help my aunt, and for another purpose I have in my mind."

"I've heard father say that your uncle is letting himself and his farm go to the dogs, and that he thinks it will only be a question of time before the farm will have to be sold."

"As long as I have money I won't let it come to that. Aunt likes the place, and Mr. Stapleton's conduct is a great trial to her."

Jack rowed up to the landing-place in front of the Munson property, and helped Grace ashore.

"I'll tie this boat here and you can tell Bob how it came into my possession. If he can find out who the boat belongs to I'll return it, or the man can come here and get it. It is possible that it may have been lost by some coasting vessel, or it got loose from some wharf and floated away."

Jack left Grace at the gate leading to her home and walked on toward his own place.



He walked up the lane, keeping a wary eye out for his uncle, for he was very doubtful as to the reception he might receive at the hands of Mr. Stapleton.

He wanted to see Andy first, but as there was no sign of him in sight he concluded that he was either repairing the wall down the road, or had gone back to work in the fields.

When he reached the vicinity of the house he looked around for his uncle, but he wasn't to be seen, either.

Then all at once it occurred to him that it was possible that Mr. Stapleton might have discovered the box of money in the tree.

The possibility of such a thing gave him a shock.

"I shan't feel easy until I make sure that he hasn't," he said to himself. "I'll go out to the point of the bluff and investigate."

Accordingly he got over the fence into his long and narrow acre, and made his way to the dead tree.

To his great relief the stones were, or seemed to be, in exactly the same position he had left them.

Ezra Stapleton had removed the rope from the dead trunk and carried it away.

"The box is all right, that's some satisfaction," he said, turning to retrace his steps.

After going a few yards he stopped.

Something suggested that he had better make sure that the box was still in the tree.

So he went back, removed the stones, and thrust in his hand.

He uttered a cry of dismay.

The box was gone.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### JACK DECIDES TO SHADOW HIS UNCLE.

There wasn't any doubt in the boy's mind as to who had taken the box. His uncle had evidently felt sure that Jack had hidden the box somewhere on the point, and as he had failed to worm the secret from him he had looked around on his own account to see if he could find it. As the ground was moist he followed Jack's footprints to the tree where he easily saw how the boy had paused there.

The stones lying against the roots of the withered tree no doubt had aroused his curiosity, and he had pulled them away.

That revealed the hole.

He had inserted his hand and found the box, of course, to his intense satisfaction.

Then he had replaced the stones in their former position to deceive Jack, when he came there to look, that the box was still there.

It was very like his uncle to do such a trick.

The boy was overcome by the sense of his loss.

He felt confident that the money was now lost to him forever.

He was very much discouraged, for he had intended to use some of that cash to prosecute his investigations with reference to the presumed wreck of the *Caliope* in the inlet, with its treasure box containing a quarter of a million in English sovereigns.

He had persuaded himself that there was little doubt as to the identity of the lost vessel, on account of the brief survey he had obtained of the deck of the wreck.

This being so, he was just as confident that the money was there, too, awaiting the lucky person who brought the proper means to bear upon it.

Until he had found the box of gold coin he had been contented to let matters take their course with respect to the recovery of the treasure, because he couldn't help himself; but now, after having had the means of achieving that object placed so unexpectedly within his grasp, and then to lose it almost in the same breath, his disappointment was intense.

As he sat on a boulder in a most unhappy frame of mind his eyes lighted on a glistening object a few feet away.

He went over and picked it up.

It was a twenty-dollar gold-piece—one which had evidently slipped out of the box while Ezra Stapleton was carrying it away, and had rolled aside unnoticed by the farmer. Jack gazed at it mournfully.

It was worth twenty good dollars, but that fact afforded the boy very little satisfaction at that moment.

He felt that it was the only share of his find that he ever would have the satisfaction of handling.

Slipping it into his pocket, he walked sorrowfully away.

Jack didn't go near the house till he heard his aunt ring the bell announcing that dinner was on the table.

As he crossed the yard he saw Andy coming up the lane.

He sat down on the saw-horse and waited for him to come up, feeling that he would rather go inside with Andy than by himself.

As the hired hand entered the yard Jack thought he looked kind of funny.

The closer he approached the queerer he looked.

Soon Jack saw that Andy had a black eye, and that his face was swollen.

"What the dickens is the matter with you, Andy?"

"Nothin' much," grinned the hired hand.

"You look as if you'd been fighting."

"I guess that's about right."

"Who were you fighting with?"

"I thought you knew."

Jack shook his head.

"I suppose you remember that I interfered between you and your uncle this mornin', and gave you a chance to get away from him?"

"Yes, I remember, and I am much obliged to you for doing so. Do you mean to say that you and Mr. Stapleton came to blows?"

"It kind of looked that way for several minutes. When



we quit we each had somethin' to remember the other. He gave me this eye, and bruised me some, and I skinned my knuckles on his hard face. I got first blood, so I'm satisfied."

"My gracious! So you actually fought with Mr. Stapleton."

"Yes, and I found that he has a pretty hard fist. He didn't lick me, though he tried hard enough while the scrap lasted. We only had one round, but it was a good one. When we stopped to breathe he sent me down to the road to repair the fence. I haven't seen him since. Have you?"

"Yes, I have. He caught me in the barn, but I staved him off with a pitchfork. Then—but I'll tell you about it after dinner, if I get the chance."

They both washed up at a bucket and then entered the kitchen, where the table was spread.

Mr. Stapleton and his wife were already eating dinner.

The little woman looked surprised at Andy's bunged-up countenance.

"Why, Andy, what happened to you?"

It was clear that she was wholly in the dark as to the stirring events of the morning.

"Oh, I had a little argument with—well, a person on Jack's land, and I suffered somewhat from the effects of it."

Mrs. Stapleton looked inquiringly at her husband, whose not over-prepossessing features bore a number of evidences of a similar kind of argument.

He was smiling sardonically, as if something gave him secret satisfaction.

As the smile was largely directed at Jack, and the lad observed it, he was at no great loss to account for the reason of it.

Mr. Stapleton was chuckling to himself at having outwitted the boy, and gotten possession of a valuable prize.

He had no idea that his nephew had as yet discovered his loss.

As the meal progressed Ezra gave plenty of evidence that his anger had melted away, and that he was feeling uncommonly good.

Mrs. Stapleton was rather puzzled to account for her husband's manner, as well as Andy's bruised aspect.

She guessed that it was her husband and the hired man who had had the argument in question, and she wondered that no further results had come out of it.

As for Jack, she supposed he had been at work all morning.

Mr. Stapleton finished his dinner and left the table without issuing any orders to his nephew.

He went into the yard, lighted his pipe, walked over to the nearest fence, and leaned upon it, with his eyes fixed upon the distant spire of the village church.

Jack could see him through the open kitchen doorway, and the boy wondered if his uncle was figuring what he would do with the box of money he had got possession of in such an underhanded way.

It was quite patent to the lad that his aunt knew nothing about the matter at all, which was no surprise to him, as he did not suppose that his uncle would take her into his confidence.

He wondered where Mr. Stapleton had concealed the money-box, but he had no great hopes that his relative would let him get wind of its whereabouts.

There were a dozen places where his uncle might have hidden it with perfect security, as far as he was concerned, and he had no doubt that Mr. Stapleton would keep a sharp eye upon it.

When Jack had finished his dinner he accompanied Andy to the barn, and there detailed to him the events of the morning.

It was the first intimation that Andy had had of Jack's discovery of the box of money, and he was naturally astonished to learn about it.

The boy told him how he had hidden it in the base of the dead tree at the end of the point, and that there was no doubt Mr. Stapleton had found it and carried it away.

"There was over \$1,000 in gold in that box," said Jack in a discouraged tone. "It belongs to me by rights, but I'll never see it again now."

"If I was you, Jack, I wouldn't do another stroke of work on this place until you have found it again," said Andy, nodding his head vigorously.

"How will that help me to find it?" asked the boy.

"What you want to do is to watch Mr. Stapleton wherever he goes about the farm. He's bound to go to the place where he's concealed the box in order to get some of the money when he wants it. You must start in right away, before he suspects your purpose, for he doesn't know that you have missed the box yet. Watch out that he doesn't get on to you."

"I guess he has hidden that box in his room in the house, and I can't shadow him there. He might go in his room a dozen times a day, and I never would be able to see what he did there."

"I don't believe he took it to his room, as he wouldn't want his wife to know anything about the money, and he knows she might walk into the room any time when he was there and catch sight of the coin. He may have taken it up to the garret, or he may have hidden it in the barn here. Or he may have buried it in a corner of the truck patch, or under one of the boulders in your field."

"Yes, there are lots of places where he may have put it."

"That's right," admitted Andy. "By keeping a close eye on his movements you may be able to find out in time. He will probably only take out one or two of the gold pieces at a time, as he needs the money. He will try and make it last a good while."

"A thousand dollars ought to last him some time, if he only means to spend it on himself," replied Jack.

"Well, it's up to you, Jack, to see that he doesn't spend it on himself, or in any other way. Just you do as I say—watch him."



Thus speaking, Andy went back to his job on the stone wall.

Jack thought the hired man's advice good, and determined to act on it.

He looked out of the barn door and saw his uncle still smoking his pipe by the fence.

"I'll go up into the loft and watch him to see what he'll do next. Usually he goes to the village after dinner. It's a wonder he hasn't gone before this, especially as he probably has several twenty-dollar gold pieces in his pocket."

So Jack went up the stairs, passed through the open trap-door, and took up his position at one of the small window openings that commanded a view of the spot where Ezra Stapleton was standing.

In ten minutes Mr. Stapleton knocked out the ashes from his pipe, put it into his pocket, and walked toward the house.

Mrs. Stapleton came to the kitchen door with a pan of dirty water, and emptied it on the ground.

Jack saw his uncle stop and talk to her.

Then he looked all around the barnyard, and finally walked toward the barn.

As soon as Jack saw he was coming into the building he whipped off his shoes, and crept over to the trap-door to take a peep of his movements below.

He saw Mr. Stapleton pry into every nook and corner of the floor below, and finally come toward the stairs.

"He's coming up here," breathed the boy. "I must hide quick."

On the spur of the moment he burrowed into a pile of loose hay, and lay very still indeed.

His uncle came up through the trap, walked around the loft, peeping behind every box and obstruction that might serve as a place of concealment for anyone, and then Jack saw him turn down the trap and place a weight on it.

Apparently he was satisfied that he was alone.

After going to two of the windows and looking out over the landscape, he walked over to a chest full of grain, groped about for a moment or two, and then pulled out the precious tin box.

Jack drew a short, gasping breath, and his eyes sparkled with satisfaction.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE ELUSIVE TREASURE BOX.

Mr. Stapleton brushed away the dust from a spot on the floor, and then seating himself with the box between his legs, took out a handful of the money and began to count it.

He repeated this operation until he had ascertained the amount the box contained.

Then he put the money back, tied the cover down again

with a piece of cord, replaced the box in the bin, taking care to force it deep down into the grain, opened the trap, and went down the stairs.

In a few minutes Jack left his place of concealment, ran to the window overlooking the barnyard, and saw his uncle walking toward the lane.

He watched him as long as he remained in sight, and then turned away with a light heart.

"This is a regular game of hide-and-seek," he chuckled. "I hid the box and then Mr. Stapleton nosed around till he found it. Then he hid it, and I have discovered it once more. If he gets hold of it again I ought to be kicked."

He walked to the bin and inside of a minute dug up the money-box.

"I never thought to see you again," he said, gazing at it fondly.

He carried it over to the window where he could keep his eye on the lane.

"I guess Mr. Stapleton has gone to the village, all right. It'll be safe for me to waste a few minutes counting the money, for I want to know how much I'm worth."

He untied the cord, threw open the cover, and began to count the golden coin.

When he had finished the job he found that there was \$2,600 in the box.

"That's more than I thought there was," he said, in a tone of great satisfaction. "It's a regular windfall. I'll bet Mr. Stapleton feels pretty good now. He won't feel quite so happy the next time he looks into that bin."

The boy chuckled as he pictured his uncle's consternation when he found out that the box had disappeared.

"He'll feel just like I did when I put my hand into the hollow of the tree and found that the box was not there, and it will serve him right."

The next question that concerned him was where should he secrete the box with a reasonable certainty that it would not be disturbed.

Not in his room, for that is where Mr. Stapleton would be sure to look as soon as he missed the box from the bin.

Finally he decided to bury it somewhere.

Taking the box under his arm, Jack left the loft and the barn.

Going out into a small patch of woods near the point, he selected a certain tree that was different from the others and buried the box at its roots, carefully obliterating all traces of the operation.

Then he left the spot, and went down to the road, where Andy was rebuilding the dilapidated wall.

"Well," said the hired man, "your uncle passed along this way half an hour ago on his way to the village."

"That's what I supposed, for I watched him go down the lane."

"He didn't set you to work this afternoon, did he?"

"No."

"I guess he expects you to help me. You'd better turn in and give me a hand."



"All right," agreed Jack.

"You seem to be feelin' good again," said Andy, looking fixedly at him. "Haven't got a line on your box, have you?"

"Yes."

"What—already!" exclaimed the hired man, with a look of interest.

Jack nodded.

"Where do you think Mr. Stapleton hid it?"

"I know where he hid it."

"You don't say!" in surprise. "Where?"

"In the grain bin in the loft of the barn."

"Is that a fact?"

"Sure thing."

"Then you've recovered it, have you?"

"I have."

"Good enough. I'm glad to hear it. What did you do with it? Take it to your room?"

"I'm not such a chump. I buried it."

"In a safe place?"

"I guess it's safe enough."

"Your uncle will be madder than a whole nest of hornets when he finds it is gone from the bin."

"I'll bet he will."

"He'll suspect you, of course."

"I expect that."

"If he taxes you with having taken it, what are you goin' to say?"

"I won't deny it."

"Then he'll go for you bald-headed."

"I don't care. He won't get the money, just the same."

"I'd rather not be in your shoes," said Andy, solemnly.

"Wouldn't you? Not for \$2,600?"

"What do you mean by \$2,600?"

"That's the amount that's in the box."

"Is that right?" asked Andy in astonishment. "Did you count it?"

"I did."

"You're in luck."

"That's the way I look at it."

"Why didn't you take it and put it in the village bank?"

"Because I'm under age. My uncle could claim that he is my guardian and insist on taking charge of the money."

"You needn't tell him that you had put it in the bank."

"He might find it out some way. I think it's safer where it is."

"I hope so for your sake. Do you mean to let it stay there?"

"I do until I need it."

"What would you need it for?"

"Oh, I have a plan for using some of it."

"You have, eh?"

"Yes. That reminds me that I meant to keep a few of the gold pieces out. I wanted to give my aunt \$100, and pay you what my uncle owes you."

"Thanks, Jack, I wouldn't mind accepting it if you

wanted to be liberal. I'd like to buy a new suit and some other things I need."

"How much does Mr. Stapleton owe you?"

Andy made a mental calculation, and said that the farmer owed him a little over \$70."

"All right, Andy, you shall have it to-night."

"You needn't be in a rush about it, Jack," replied the hired man.

"I might as well get it for you right away as well as later on."

"Just as you say."

"I'll dig the box up again before Mr. Stapleton gets back from the village and take out what I want. You see, as soon as he finds that the box is gone from the bin he may do just what I did to him—watch me, and then I'd have to be mighty cautious about going near the spot where it's hidden."

"That's right," replied Andy, with a nod.

Jack helped on the wall until they had used up all the stones on hand, and had nearly completed the job.

Then he and Andy returned to the barnyard.

"I guess I'll go swimmin' with you this afternoon," said the hired man. "We'll go early and drive the cows home afterward."

"I'd like to have you go," said Jack. "I'll go and get that money for you and aunt now."

He took the small spade he had used before and started for the wood, whistling cheerily as he went.

As he came in sight of the tree he whistled more merrily than ever.

At last he arrived at his destination, and removed the shovel from his shoulder.

Then it was that the notes of the tune froze on his lips, and he gazed spellbound at an open hole in the ground just where he had buried the box.

His treasure box had been stolen again.

## CHAPTER X.

### A CLEW.

To say that Jack was paralyzed by the discovery that his box had disappeared again would but faintly describe his consternation.

Who had taken it this time?

Not Mr. Stapleton, for he had gone to the village.

Then who?

Somebody must have been in that little woods when he buried the box, had seen him do it, and then as soon as he had gone had dug it up to see what was in it.

Who could this somebody be?

A tramp?

Hardly, for no tramps had been seen in that locality since the preceding year.

As a rule, homeless individuals of that stripe did not come down on that neck of land and across the Stapleton farm.

It was too long and purposeless a walk for them.

As a matter of fact, nobody came that way except they



intended to call at the house, and the patch of woods was behind the house and not in the track of a visitor.

While Jack was gazing blankly on the ground he saw an object lying near the hole.

He looked to see what it was.

It proved to be an ivory-handled penknife.

"I'll bet that was dropped by the person who stole my box," muttered Jack, as he examined it.

It was an expensive four-bladed knife, and across each side was a silver plate.

On one of the plates a name was engraved.

Jack easily deciphered it.

It was "Herbert Gleason."

"It can't be that he was down here on the farm," breathed Jack. "What could bring him here?"

This question was easier asked than answered.

Jack could think of no reason to account for Herbert's presence there.

He and Herbert were not friends, or even associates.

Herbert looked down on him with a species of scorn as being a common farmer's boy.

Therefore he wouldn't visit the farm to see him.

"Maybe Herbert lost his knife, and the person who stole my box found it awhile ago, and accidentally dropped or left it here."

Still that was but pure conjecture.

After Jack had somewhat recovered his composure he walked about the little wood hunting for some other clew to the thief.

He found nothing else that would throw light on the party who had dug up the box.

Finally he walked out on the edge of the bluff and looked down at the beach below.

This was not the same patch of beach which Grace Munson had been marooned on.

It was separated from that spot by an inaccessible spur of rock that jutted out into Vineyard Sound and cut the line of shore into two parts.

It was impossible to walk from one to the other, even at low tide.

At the base of the said spur of rock on that side was a small marine cavern.

It was possible to enter it when the tide was low.

When the tide was up it was full of water and the entrance entirely covered.

The tide was about two-thirds flood when Jack looked down.

The distance between where he stood and the half-submerged beach was about twenty-five feet.

This section of the bluff was not all rock, but largely an admixture of earth.

Any boy or man could climb up and down it by using an ordinary amount of dexterity.

Thence the shore line led around and up another narrow inlet almost to the village.

Jack stood, as we have said, on the edge of the bluff,

looking down at the water and pondering upon the situation.

Suddenly something happened.

The section of earth on which he stood gave away without warning, and the boy went sprawling down to the shore with more haste than grace.

He landed in a heap within a foot of the water's edge.

"Gee whizz!" he ejaculated, sitting up in some bewilderment. "Talk about coasting, that was a peach of a slide. And so unexpected, too. It's a mighty good thing for me that I didn't light on a rock, for I should in that case probably have been stunned, and then if I remained unconscious long enough the tide would have put me out of business for good and all."

He got on his feet and looked up at the top of the bluff.

"It won't take me long to get back, at any rate," he said to himself.

He was about to climb when he saw the setting sun glistening on some object at the water's edge, and near the mouth of the marine cavern, which was nearly covered by the tide.

He walked over and looked at it.

Then he stooped and picked it up.

It was a tarnished twenty-dollar gold piece.

He stood spellbound.

This coin had surely come out of his stolen box.

What had brought it here?

He looked carefully around and saw a boy's footprints in the sand.

They pointed directly at the cave.

From these two clews Jack made the following deductions:

That the person who had stolen the money box was a boy.

That to avoid observation he had gone into the cave to examine the interior of the box, for the tide was low three hours or so before, when Jack buried the box.

That, having ascertained its valuable contents, he had doubtless carried it off along the shore to his home in the village.

If his line of reasoning was correct, and it looked that way, then the money was as good as lost to him.

Jack tried to peer into the cave, though why he did so he couldn't have explained, as it was impossible for him to make out anything there.

Finally he turned away from it and traced the steps to a point that showed where the boy had come down from the bluff above.

From that point they led direct to the cave.

The boy's footsteps in the other direction, that is toward the village, were entirely wiped out under the water.

"That settles it," thought Jack. "The only thing I can do now is to go to the village and visit some of the stores, say the bake shop and the candy stores, and ask the owners to make a note of any boy who offers a twenty-dollar gold piece in payment for a purchase. I'll tell them that the money, especially if it has a tarnished look, is stolen coin,



and that they must give me the name of the boy offering such a piece of money, but that they must not alarm the boy by accusing him of theft. Yes, I think by that means I may be able to get on the track of my money. Twenty-dollar gold pieces are not a current coin in the village, and are not often taken from the bank, supposing that the bank has any, which I think is doubtful."

As that seemed a pretty good line of action to take in the matter, and promised results, unless the boy was an unusually foxy youth, Jack climbed to the top of the bluff and retraced his steps to the farmyard, where he found Andy impatiently waiting for him to return and go swimming.

## CHAPTER XI.

### WHAT HAPPENED ON THE SHORE AT MIDNIGHT.

"What kept you so long, Jack?" said Andy. "Couldn't you decide how much money you wanted to take out of the box?"

"You won't fall in a fit if I tell you something, will you?" asked Jack.

"What do you mean by that?" asked the hired man, wonderingly.

"A very remarkable thing has happened."

"Has it? Let's hear what it is."

"That money box has disappeared again."

"What!" exclaimed Andy, incredulously. "The box gone again? Come, now, you're jokin', ain't you?"

"I wish I was."

"Oh, I see. That's what kept you so long. You've forgotten under which tree you buried it."

"It's worse than that. Some boy was sneaking around in the woods when I hid it. He watched me, and when I went away he dug it up and carried it off."

Andy looked hard at Jack, as if he found the story hard to swallow.

"You say it was some boy. How do you know it was a boy if you didn't see him do it?"

"In the first place, I found a penknife belonging to Herbert Gleason near the vacant hole. In the next I found where a boy had gone down to the beach, walked to that marine cavern under the ledge with the box——"

"How could you tell that?"

"I know it was a boy by his tracks in the sand, and I know he carried the box there because I found one of my twenty-dollar gold pieces in the sand near the mouth of the cavern."

"This is a straight story, is it?"

"Perfectly straight."

"Well, if that doesn't beat the Dutch. One would think that box was bewitched. Here you find a box full of money in your field this morning and you carry it off and hide it. Your uncle discovers the box where you put it and he hides it in the grain bin in the loft of the barn. Then you watch and find out its hiding place, thus getting it back again. You go and bury it in the woods. Along

comes a strange boy who digs it up and carries it off. All this in one day. Yes, it is remarkable, for a fact."

"However, I haven't given up all hope of getting it back again."

"Haven't you? I should after all that. How do you expect to recover it?"

Jack told him how he had figured on getting on the track of it.

"That isn't a bad way. I never should have thought of that. You've a great head, Jack. I believe you're a born detective."

"Oh, I don't know," replied the boy. "It isn't such a great idea. Most anybody would think of that. If the money was in bills I couldn't work it quite so well, unless the bills were larger ones. But as it is all in twenty-dollar gold pieces, and a good many of them are tarnished, it is easier. A twenty-dollar piece is not often tendered in payment for a purchase to a storekeeper, especially by a boy. The circumstance is easily remembered, so that's the way I expect to get on to the thief, though the finding of the knife almost establishes his identity already."

"If I was you I'd make it my business to watch Herbert Gleason to-morrow. You don't think that he hid the box in the cavern, do you?"

"No, I think he's taken it home with him. There was nothing to prevent him doing so."

"Perhaps not," replied Andy thoughtfully. "By the way, is Gleason a foxy kind of boy?"

"I'm not sure whether he is or not."

"What was he doing in our woods anyway?"

"You've got me. I'm not certain that the boy who stole the box was Gleason."

"Isn't the knife evidence enough?"

"It is not conclusive, because he might have lost the knife. The thief might have been a village boy who had found it."

"I don't agree with you. The chances are against that supposition. Now it is my idea that whoever found that box hid it in the cavern for a purpose."

"What purpose?"

"He didn't want to carry it through the village to his home in daylight, lest somebody should notice it under his arm and afterward report the fact if you circulated the news through the village that you had lost such a box. In a small village like Fairdale, where everybody knows everybody else, and the smallest intelligence flies rapidly from mouth to mouth, it's very hard to keep anything secret. If Gleason is a slick youngster he'd consider all the chances before he took any risk. He'd know that the box was perfectly safe in the cavern while the tide was up. No one can get into that hole much before midnight. What's to prevent him from going back there at that hour and taking the box home when everybody is in bed? No one is likely to see him carrying a box under his arm at that time. That's the way I would do it."

Andy's argument rather impressed Jack.

It was plausible, at any rate.



"Well," he said, after a moment's reflection, "I can test the matter by lying in wait at the top of the bluff at midnight to see if anyone goes to the cavern."

"I would. I'll keep you company."

"But you've got to get up at half-past four. You'll lose half of your sleep."

"I don't mind that."

"If you don't mind it I shall be glad to have you watch with me, for it will be a lonesome job."

"Then that's settled. Now we'll go in swimmin'. I see the boys haven't come yet."

They had reached the shore of the inlet by this time, and, taking off their clothes, were soon splashing around in the water.

The majority of the village boys went swimming in their own inlet, but a few, who were particularly friendly with the farm lads in that vicinity, came over to that place at sundown.

Jack and Andy left about the time the others began to put in an appearance, as they had quite a bit of work to do before dark.

Mr. Stapleton didn't come home until supper was over.

He was in a particularly jolly mood and his breath put one in mind of a distillery.

He surprised his wife by throwing her a handful of small bills, amounting in all to about \$30, and he accompanied the gift with the remark that she was "a good old girl."

He handed Andy \$10 on account of his wages and told him he'd give him the balance of his money in a day or two.

He even went so far as to hand a dollar to Jack, with a grin and a chuckle—something he had never done before.

"He evidently considers himself a made man," said Andy to Jack; "but he'll change his tune when he finds that the box has gone from the bin."

"All I'm afraid of is that he'll make the place too hot for me," replied the boy, "and I don't want to leave."

"You won't have to leave if I can help it," answered the hired man in a determined tone.

Mr. Stapleton went to bed immediately after supper, and his wife followed at nine o'clock.

Jack and Andy sat in the kitchen and talked until ten; then they quietly left the house and took their way through the wood to the edge of the bluff where Jack had had his tumble.

The boy pointed out to his companion the spot where he had taken his involuntary slide, and the two had a laugh over it.

It was a moonlight night, which rather favored their purpose, for they could see the line of the shore all the way to where it turned up at the neighboring inlet.

It might have been eleven o'clock, and the tide was ebbing fast, when Andy thumped Jack on the arm and called his attention to two moving objects approaching from down the beach.

"If one of those is Herbert Gleason he must have taken his cousin into his confidence," said Jack. "It begins to look as if your idea was the right one—that he hid the money box in the marine cavern with the intention of removing it during darkness."

"That's just what I said," replied Andy.

As the newcomers drew closer, however, the watchers, lying at full length on the bluff, saw that they were not boys at all, but a couple of men.

They came straight on, passed directly under the spot where Jack and Andy lay and walked up to the projecting spur of rock.

As they couldn't go any further, they came to a stop.

By their actions it looked as though they were strangers in that region, and had expected to find a continuous line of beach around the point.

After a consultation, during which they looked up at the bluff several times, they sat down in the shadow of a huge boulder, no doubt to rest.

Both men produced pipes, lit them and smoked away.

"I wonder who they are?" asked Jack.

Andy couldn't tell him, so their identity remained a mystery.

Fifteen minutes passed and then another figure appeared down the beach coming in that direction.

There wasn't any doubt about its being a boy.

He was walking along close to the water's edge and seemed to be in a hurry.

"That's Herbert for a dollar," said Jack in some little excitement. "He's after the box. He'll never go into the cavern with those two men there. I wonder what he'll do when he sees them?"

Herbert Gleason, however, kept right on, and it was soon apparent to the watchers that he did not notice the two men who sat smoking in the shadow of the boulder right under the bluff.

Herbert went straight up to the spur of outlying rock and looked into the hole that was not yet quite emptied of water.

His actions naturally attracted the attention of the two men, who watched him to see what he was up to there at that unusual hour.

"Herbert is likely to meet with a surprise when he fetches the tin box out of that cavern," said Jack, "for I'll bet those two men will want to know what's in the box. This is going to make matters awkward for us, Andy."

"The box is yours, Jack, so I reckon we're not going to let it get away from us without a fight. Go into the woods and find a couple of stout limbs that will answer for cudgels. I'm goin' to see that we get the box or know the reason why not."

Jack agreed with Andy.

If the money box was going to figure in the proceedings, as he felt sure it would, he was game for a struggle to regain possession of it.

So he went to the patch of woods and soon returned



with a couple of sticks that promised to answer for serviceable weapons.

Herbert was still standing near the cavern waiting for the water to subside so he could enter without wetting his feet.

The men hadn't moved, and were evidently watching him with some interest.

At length the water receded enough for Herbert's purpose, and he disappeared into the hole.

After an interval of five minutes the men got up and approached the cavern.

"Maybe they think that's an underground road to the other side of the spur of rock," said Jack.

"They may think so," replied Andy.

Just then Herbert Gleason reappeared with something under his arm.

He started back with dismay when he came face to face with the two men.

What they said to him neither Jack nor Andy could hear at that distance, but they saw Herbert jump to one side and dart off down the beach.

The men ran after him, and being swifter on their feet and unencumbered, they overtook the village dude at a point opposite where the watchers lay on the bluff.

One grabbed the box from under Herbert's arm, while the other held him, and then the boy uttered a cry for help.

"Come on, Jack, it's time we interfered," cried Andy, springing to his feet.

Gripping their cudgels ready for instant action, they slid down the side of the bluff in the twinkling of an eye.

## CHAPTER XII.

### SAVED FROM THE FLAMES.

Jack and Andy's sudden and unexpected appearance on the scene took the two men completely by surprise.

"Drop that box!" cried Granger, flourishing his stick over the head of the fellow who had possession of it.

"Drop that boy!" roared Andy, making for the man who had hold of Herbert.

Both the box and the boy were relinquished by the men in order to defend themselves, but they stood their ground pluckily, and one of them flashed a revolver from his hip pocket and cocked it.

Herbert, as soon as he found himself at liberty, made a dash down the beach, without thinking any more about the box, so frightened was he.

The glinting of the moonlight on the barrel of the revolver attracted Andy's attention to it, and quick as a flash he sprang at the man and brought the stick down on his arm.

The man uttered a sharp cry of pain, and the weapon fell to the beach.

Andy followed up his advantage with another fierce demonstration with his cudgel.

The fellow sprang back to evade the swing of the stick,

and then the hired man quickly picked up the revolver with his left hand.

In the meantime Jack and his opponent had closed in a struggle for the mastery.

They staggered about, and finally went down on the beach, with the boy on top.

The club had fallen from his hand, but for all that Jack was able to hold his own with his antagonist.

"What did you chaps attack that boy for?" he demanded of the fellow under him.

An imprecation was the only reply he received.

"Let him up," said Andy, who had backed up near him, after having put the other man out of business.

Jack got off his adversary and the fellow scrambled on his feet.

After favoring the lad with a vindictive scowl he walked over to his companion, who was nursing his injured arm and muttering hard expressions against Andy.

The hired hand paid no further attention to him, but picked up the tin box and told Jack to follow him.

"Here, I want my gun," said the fellow who had lost his weapon.

"Not much. Do you take me for a fool? Wait here till we reach the top of the bluff and then I'll throw it down to you," said Andy.

He and Jack crawled up the declivity, and when they had reached the top Andy looked down at the pair of discomfited strangers.

"Here's your revolver," he said.

But before tossing it down he took the precaution to discharge the six chambers into the air.

Then he and Jack left the spot and hurried to the farmhouse.

"Where are you goin' to hide the box now?" he asked Jack as they walked along.

"Blessed if I know. I'm afraid to hide it again for fear of losing it once more."

"We'll go in the barn and consider the matter," replied Andy.

As soon as he opened the big door and closed it after them he lighted one of the lanterns that hung from pegs in an upright post.

Securing the door on the inside, he led the way to the loft.

Placing the lantern on the floor, he and Jack squatted down on the boards.

Jack undid the string and removed the cover.

The light flashed on the gold coins.

"They're all there, thank goodness," said the boy. "At least I don't miss any."

"They look good," remarked Andy. "So there's \$2,600 there, eh?"

"Herbert may have taken some out, or he may not. There's no way to tell except by recounting them, and I guess it isn't worth while. Here's three for you, Andy. That squares your wages, with the ten dollars Mr. Stapleton gave you to-night."



"Thanks," said Andy, pocketing the gold pieces.

"Now here are five more for helping me recover the box," and Jack held them out to his companion.

"No," replied Andy. "I'm not going to charge you anythin' for what I did for you."

"You've got to take them. I make you a present of them," insisted Jack.

Andy accepted the \$100 with some reluctance.

"It's just like robbin' you," he said.

"No, it isn't. If it hadn't been for you I never would have got the box back."

Andy had to acknowledge that there was some truth in that.

"Now," said Jack, after putting another \$100 in his pocket that he meant to give his aunt, and retying up the box, "where shall I put it where it will be safe?"

"When your uncle misses it from the bin he'll search high and low to find it again, so it won't do to put it anywhere that he is at all likely to look," said Andy.

Jack fully agreed with him on that point.

They considered a number of places that they thought likely ones and at length decided to bury it in a certain corner of the truck patch.

So, armed with a shovel, they went to the designated spot and put the money box out of sight.

As they were returning to the house a bright glare of light sprang up in the near distance.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Jack. "There's a fire. It must be the Munson house."

"Or their barn," said Andy. "We must run over and help them."

They started down the lane on the run, and as they went the glare increased in intensity, and a cloud of smoke mounted and hung aloft in the still morning air.

There was a hand engine in the village, operated by a volunteer company of firemen, but it would probably be some time before the machine could be brought to the scene of the fire.

Jack and Andy leaped the gate at the end of the lane and started in the direction of the inlet.

They soon came in sight of the Munson farmhouse and saw that the kitchen end of the building was in flames, which had by this time caught on to a portion of the second-story and was crawling up toward the roof.

"I'm afraid they never will be able to save the house," panted Jack as he ran beside Andy.

The hired man did not answer except to call on the boy to make a fresh spurt.

As they dashed through the Munson gate, and up the driveway, the flames were leaping through the roof at the rear of the house, and seemed to be just getting under full headway.

The family had apparently just woke up to a realization of the disaster which faced them, for Jack saw Bob Munson, in shirt and trousers, throw up his window on the third floor, look out and then disappear.

Presently Mr. Munson appeared at a front window on the second floor, looked out and vanished in short order.

As Jack and Andy arrived in front of the house another window was thrown up, right in the blazing part of the building, and Grace Munson, in her night dress, thrust out her head and screamed for help.

"Good gracious!" cried Jack. "Look, Andy, look! There's Grace Munson. And the room is on fire, too. Why don't she make her escape downstairs?"

"Perhaps she's cut off from the door," he answered. "We'll have to save her somehow."

"We must get a ladder then," said Jack in great excitement.

"The trouble will be to find one in a hurry."

"We've got to find one."

At that moment Bob came rushing out in the greatest excitement.

"You here, Jack," he exclaimed. "For gracious sake, help me save my sister. I couldn't reach her room. The hall is burning and thick with smoke. Something must be done quick, or she'll be burned to death."

"Where can we get a ladder?" asked Jack.

"There's one at the back of the barn."

"Then you two run and get it as quick as you can. You haven't a moment to lose. I'm going to try and reach Grace another way while you're bringing it."

The fire had increased so rapidly during the last few minutes that Jack had some doubts whether it would be possible to get the ladder up in time to save the girl, who had fallen in a swoon across the window sill.

The sight of a coil rope hanging from the limb of a tree close by had suggested another plan which he had resolved to put into instant execution, though it was a risky thing for him to attempt.

He had been in Bob's room on several occasions, and knew how to reach it.

From one of the windows it was possible to reach the roof by climbing up an iron waste pipe.

It would take uncommon agility to swing himself up there, and nothing but the exigency of the moment could have induced him to try it.

Once up there, he could make his way easily to the blazing roof.

The kitchen chimney ran up through the end of that section of the house.

By tying the rope around the brickwork he could let himself down to within a couple of feet of the window where Grace lay unconscious.

The scheme flashed through his brain in a twinkling, and he lost no time in putting it into effect.

Securing the coil of rope, he met Mr. and Mrs. Munson, the latter only partially robed, coming out at the front door.

"Where are you going?" asked Mr. Munson.

"To save Grace."

"Isn't she out of her room?" asked the farmer. "Bob went to arouse her and see that she got out."



"He couldn't reach her, as the hallway is on fire and her room is cut off by the flames."

"My heaven!" gasped Mr. Munson.

Jack didn't wait to exchange another word, but dashed into the house and up the smoky stairs to Bob's room.

Out of the window he climbed and grasped the iron pipe.

Up this he shinned like a monkey, for the boy was as active as a cat.

Testing the stability of the gutter and finding it to be firm, Jack gave his body a swing and threw one leg upward.

It caught on the coping of the roof.

Then he threw up one hand and grasped the edge of the roof with that.

It was a difficult job, though, to swing the rest of his body up and at the same time make sure of maintaining his equilibrium at the critical moment.

If he failed the chances were in favor of his falling three stories and a half to the ground below.

Jack, however, did not hesitate to make the attempt, and he was so fortunate as to succeed to a nicety.

Then he scrambled to his feet, ran along the top of the front part of the house and jumped on to the blazing roof, where his situation was not a little precarious.

A brief glance in the direction of the barn showed Andy and Bob hurrying up with the ladder.

But time was exceedingly precious now.

The smoke was pouring out of the window above and around the unconscious girl, while the fire was blazing right back of her.

Jack hurriedly tied one end of the rope around the chimney and threw the coil over the eaves.

From the elevated position, almost surrounded by the smoke and the flames that were fast enveloping the entire roof, the boy saw a dozen men from adjacent farms running toward the conflagration.

Down the road he also saw the Fairdale fire engine coming on, drawn by a score of men.

He took all this in at a quick glance, for he had no time to linger in that dangerous position, and then he crawled over the eaves and slid down to the level of the window of Grace's room.

Swinging forward, he landed in the midst of a stifling smoke that nearly caused him to lose his presence of mind and his hold on the sash.

Straddling the sill, he lifted Grace up until he got a firm hold of her around the body, then, turning the rope several times around his arm, he pushed himself and his precious burden out of the window.

He swung back on a line with the chimney, and the strain that came on his one arm was terrible for a moment and dragged him downward faster than he had anticipated.

Mr. Munson, however, was on hand to break his fall and catch his daughter in his arms, but for all that Jack collapsed in a heap on the grass.

But what of that?

He had accomplished his heroic object and saved the life of Grace.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### MR. STAPLETON FINDS HIMSELF BLOCKED.

Mr. Munson carried the limp form of Grace to his wife to revive.

By this time the flames were seemingly carrying everything before them, and there looked to be little hope of saving any part of the Munson home.

In the absence of any wind, the fire burned straight upward, while the smoke hung like a pall immediately above the conflagration.

With a jingling of bells the Fairdale fire company dashed up to the farmhouse, and before many minutes a couple of streams were turned on the fire, pumped from the well and the cistern.

Jack, Andy and Bob busied themselves carrying the most valuable part of the Munson property from the burning building.

The volunteer firemen worked with such good effect, assisted as they were by the utter absence of wind, that in a very short time they had the fire under control.

It was confined to the rear section of the house, where it broke out, but as a matter of course other parts of the building were damaged by the smoke and water.

By three o'clock the fire was practically out and twenty minutes later, after a searching examination, the foreman of the fire company declared that it was all out and the firemen took up their march back for the village.

Mrs. Munson, Grace and the hired girl had taken up temporary quarters at the barn, where they clothed themselves in such garments as Bob got from his mother's closets in the front room.

When the excitement was all over Jack and Andy said they were going home.

Jack, however, was not permitted to leave until he had received the grateful thanks for his plucky and successful efforts in Grace's behalf from father, mother and the girl herself.

Bob had already thanked his chum for the rescue of his sister, and had assured Jack that he would never forget his services as long as he lived.

"We've had a night of it for fair," Andy said, as the pair walked back to the Stapleton farm. "No use of turning in now, for the sun will be up in less than an hour."

"Oh, I don't feel a bit sleepy," returned Jack. "The only thing that troubles me is my arm, which is sore and lame from the wrenching it got."

"You're a plucky boy, Jack," said Andy, admiringly. "You took a good many chances goin' up on that burnin' roof. But if it hadn't been for your efforts I am afraid that it might have gone hard with Munson's daughter."

"I did what I thought was the right thing under the



circumstances. I knew she was in great peril, and I couldn't tell how long it would take to bring up that ladder, so when I saw the coil of rope hanging on the tree the scheme which I put into execution flashed through my mind."

When they reached the house neither Mr. nor Mrs. Stapleton was stirring yet, so they opened up the barn and started their usual morning labors.

At five o'clock smoke issued from the kitchen chimney, which showed that Mrs. Stapleton was up and doing.

Jack entered the kitchen with a pail of water and then surprised her with the news of the partial destruction of the Munson farmhouse.

While they were talking Ezra Stapleton made his appearance.

He had slept off his boozy condition, and was in fairly good humor for him.

Jack had to repeat the story of the fire for his benefit.

It gave Mr. Stapleton a good deal of satisfaction, for he did not like farmer Munson, on account of that man's criticisms of his shiftless conduct.

"I'll bet I'm as well off as Munson now," he muttered, thinking of the tin box full of twenty dollar gold pieces lying, as he supposed, in the grain bin.

Mr. Stapleton did not discover his loss for several days, as he had no occasion to replenish his store of pocket money.

When he did find out that the money box had vanished he acted like a wild man.

He made a beeline for Jack the first thing and accused him of taking it.

The boy did not deny the fact.

"What did you do with it?" demanded his uncle fiercely.

"I buried it at the foot of a tree in the woods."

"You did, eh? Show me the tree this instant, you young cub."

Jack piloted him to the spot where the open hole still remained as evidence.

"What's this?" exclaimed Mr. Stapleton, gazing at the hole at the root of the tree.

"That's the hole I dug to hide the box," replied Jack.

"But you've dug it up again."

"No, I didn't."

"I say you did. Can't I see?"

"One of the village boys was sneaking around here when I buried the box; then when I went away he dug it up and carried it off."

"That's a lie," roared Ezra, in a passion.

"No, it isn't a lie. I can prove it by Andy McPike."

"Do you mean to say that one of the boys of the village has that money now?" howled the irate farmer.

"No. He did have it; but I discovered he had hidden it in the marine cavern on the shore, so Andy and I got it back."

"Oh, you did," replied Mr. Stapleton with an air of relief. "Well, where is it now?"

"It's safe, I hope."

"Tell me this instant what you did with it."

"I'd rather not. It's my money, and I'd prefer to have charge of it myself."

"You're under age, and I'm your guardeen. The law says that I must take charge of any property belongin' to you, do you hear?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then go and get that money and hand it over to me."

"I have a special use for that money myself," protested Jack.

"I don't care what use you have for it, you haven't no right to use it.. I'm responsible to the law for that money and I'm goin' to take charge of it"

Jack was silent.

"Did you hear what I said?" bellowed Ezra Stapleton.

"I heard you, sir."

"Then do as I tell you."

Jack turned on his heel and walked back to the farmyard, followed by his uncle.

"Where did you hide it?" asked the farmer as the boy walked into the kitchen.

"Aunt Mary," said Jack, "I want to tell you something."

"You needn't waste no time tellin' her about that money," said Mr. Stapleton, who had a decided objection to having his wife enlightened on the subject.

Jack paid no attention to him.

"Aunt Mary, I found a tin box full of money in my field yesterday morning."

"My gracious!" exclaimed Mrs. Stapleton in great astonishment.

"Here's \$100 of it that I want you to have to buy yourself some clothes and things that you need," and he placed five twenty-dollar gold pieces in her hand. "I paid Andy the balance due him for wages to date, so that squares his account with the farm. The rest of the money I think I have a right to do with us I choose."

"No, you ain't got no right to do anythin' with it," interjected Mr. Stapleton, angrily.

"Mr. Stapleton wants to take that money away from me," continued the boy.

"I've a right to take it away from him," insisted the farmer. "He'll spend it foolishly, and it's my duty to see that he doesn't. I'm his guardeen, and the law says I must take charge of all that belongs to him."

"If I could trust you, Mr. Stapleton, I wouldn't mind giving you the money provided I had no use for it right away."

"How dare you talk to me that way, you young monkey?" roared the farmer, angrily.

"You know that you would spend that money in the village," said Jack, not in the least intimidated by his uncle's attitude. "So if I gave it to anybody to keep for me I'd give it to aunt."

"You'll give me that money now or I'll flog the back off you," shouted Ezra Stapleton, striding forward.



Jack sprang out of his way and put the kitchen table between him and the furious man.

"Ezra," said his wife, firmly, "let Jack alone."

"You ain't got no right to interfere in this matter," retorted the farmer, sulkily.

"Yes, I have," she answered, a bit sharply. "Jack is a good boy. He's my own flesh and blood, and I won't have him whipped for nothing."

"He's no right to keep that money," persisted Mr. Stapleton, glowering at Jack.

"He found it, didn't he?" she asked.

"That don't make no manner of difference."

"Yes, it does. If he found it it is his money."

"I didn't say it wasn't his money; but he's under age, and the law——"

"Never mind the law, Ezra. You do what is right by the boy."

"That's what I want to do. I want to take charge of it for him."

His wife had no more confidence in his ability to take charge of the money than Jack had, and she intimated as much.

"I didn't think you'd go back on me that way, Mary," said her husband, pretending to be deeply grieved at her attitude.

"If I've lost confidence in you, Ezra, it's your own fault," replied his wife. "You are wasting your time and substance at the village tavern and elsewhere. The farm has been going to ruin this last year, and you haven't paid any attention to anything I said about it. If you keep on this way I don't know what you expect to come to. I've done all I can to bring you to your senses, but it doesn't seem to do any good. You're determined to have your own way. I suppose in the end we'll have to go to the poorhouse."

"No, you won't, Aunt Mary," put in Jack. "Not as long as I can help it. If Mr. Stapleton would only turn over a new leaf and look after the farm as he used to do, I'll give you money enough to straighten things up."

"Do you hear that, Ezra?" said his wife. "Have you the conscience to beat a boy that's willing to do his best for us? You ought to apologize to him for your conduct, and you ought to take advantage of his kindness."

Mr. Stapleton certainly did look a bit ashamed of himself.

At any rate, he made no further demonstrations against Jack, but walked slowly out of the house.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### JACK'S PLANS.

That afternoon Mr. Stapleton didn't go to the village.

All through the following week, too, Ezra Stapleton kept away from the village and worked on the farm, and he seldom lost sight of Jack for any length of time.

Mrs. Stapleton wondered if her husband had really turned over a new leaf, or if his improved line of conduct was merely temporary.

The farmer hadn't a word to say to the boy one way or the other, except with reference to farm work.

Jack was perfectly satisfied with the changed order of things.

One evening, instead of going home to his supper, he accompanied Bob to his house, the burnt part of which had just been rebuilt.

"I've brought Jack to take supper with us this evening," said Bob to his mother.

"I'm very glad you have," said Mrs. Munson. "He is a very welcome visitor."

"Thank you, Mrs. Munson," said Jack, politely. "I appreciate your kindness in saying so."

"You forget how much we owe you, Jack," replied the lady, gratefully.

"I hope you won't let that worry you, Mrs. Munson," laughed Jack.

"I trust you understand that we are all very grateful to you for what you did for Grace."

"I am sure you are, Mrs. Munson. But you couldn't think that I would stand by and see her burn up without trying to save her. I don't think I did more than my duty."

"It isn't every boy, or man either, who would have taken the risk you did to rescue our child. None of us will ever forget your heroic conduct."

Mrs. Munson turned to the stove and Bob piloted Jack into the sitting-room, where his sister was reading.

"Why, Jack Granger," cried Grace, in a pleased tone, holding out her hand to him, "I'm ever so glad to see you."

"Same here," said Jack, shaking hands with her. "You're looking quite well, and as pretty as ever."

"Thank you for the compliment," replied Grace, with a blush.

"Come on upstairs," said Bob.

It is possible that Jack would have preferred to remain in the room and talk to his friend's sister, but he did not indicate such a preference.

"What are you going to do with yourself on the Fourth, Jack?" asked Bob, after he had shown his friend a curious looking beetle he had imprisoned under a tumbler.

The Fourth of July was then two days off.

"I don't know," answered Jack. "I haven't made any plans. I thought probably you and I and the rest of the chaps would manage to have a good time."

"Suppose you come to Boston with me," proposed Bob.

"To Boston!" ejaculated Jack in surprise.

"Yes, father is going there, and is going to take me with him. I asked him to take you along, too, and he said he would be glad to do so. You'll go, won't you?"

"I'd like to, all right."

"What's to prevent you?"

"I don't know that there is anything."

"Then you'll go?" said Bob, eagerly.

"I'll have to speak to Mr. Stapleton about it, I suppose."



"Do you think he'll object?"

"No, I don't imagine he will. He's behaving pretty decent to me of late."

"Glad to hear it. It's about time he quit sitting on your neck."

"Look here, Bob, I've got a secret to tell you."

"What is it?" asked Bob, curiously.

"It'll surprise you."

"Will it? I'm ready to be surprised then," grinned Bob.

"You know that long and narrow strip of ground on the edge of the bluff that old Matthew Truesdale left to me in his will?"

"Sure I do. What about it?"

"I found a tin box under a stone in that field the other day."

"Did you? What was in it?"

"Money."

"Money!" cried Bob, in surprise. "How much?"

"There was something over \$2,600 in twenty-dollar gold pieces."

"How much?" gasped Bob.

Jack repeated his statement.

"Is this one of your jokes, Jack?"

"No, it's the solemn truth."

"You actually found a tin box under a stone in that field with \$2,600 in gold in it?"

"I did."

Jack then gave his friend a full account of the adventures of the money box from the time it came into his hands until he and Andy buried it in the corner of the truck patch just before they discovered that the Munson farmhouse was on fire.

"Geewillikins! You had the deuce of a time with it, didn't you?"

"I should say that I did," replied Jack.

"Are you sure it's safe now?"

"I hope it is."

"Did you look to see if it was?"

"No. I'm willing to take the chances sooner than let Mr. Stapleton get wise to its hiding place. He keeps a sharp watch on my actions in the hope that he may find out where I have hidden it."

"You'd never see it again if he got hold of it once more."

"I'm afraid not."

"Does your aunt know where it is?"

"No. No one but Andy besides myself."

"Andy can be trusted, I suppose."

"I'm willing to trust him, at any rate. He's all right."

"That money ought to be in a bank where it would be earning interest for you," said Bob. "It's a shame to let it lie there to no purpose."

"Well, I'm going to use some of it soon."

"In what way?"

"You couldn't guess, I suppose?"

Bob shook his head.

"I was thinking of going to Boston for the purpose of buying a diving suit, and air-pump and other paraphernalia for exploring the wreck of the ship in the inlet, which I believe to be the Caliope."

"You don't mean it."

"I do mean it. Of course I would have to take practical lessons in the use of the suit and the apparatus. Now I thought if you would go along, and your father would let you remain in Boston with me for awhile, I'll foot all the bills, you could take lessons, too; that is, in working the pump, for I expect to do the under-water work myself, and when we both were judged to be competent to use the outfit that we would bring it down here, and then we'd try to find out if that treasure box was in the cabin of the vessel, or in the mud if the cabin has rotted away."

"Say, that will be great. I'm with you, bet your life, and I don't ask you to divide any of your findings with me either. I'm willing to go into it for the fun of the thing."

"No, I'm going to give you the fifth of anything I find. If we should uncover the treasure chest, with its quarter of a million English gold, that will mean all of \$50,000 for you."

"Fifty thousand dollars!" ejaculated Bob. "Why, that is five times what my father is worth."

"What's the odds? It will be handy to have one of these days."

"Bet your life it will."

Accordingly the two boys arranged a little programme between them which included a couple of weeks or longer stay in Boston, if Mr. Munson had no objection.

## CHAPTER XV.

JACK LEARNS SOMETHING ABOUT THE DIVING BUSINESS.

At the supper table it was duly arranged that Jack was to go to Boston with Mr. Munson and Bob on the morning of the Fourth.

Subsequently Jack interviewed Mr. Munson on the more important subject that was uppermost in his mind, which involved at least a fortnight's stay in Boston of himself and Bob.

"I have business in the city that I think will take two weeks, and I want Bob with me for company. I have the money to pay his expenses and my own," he said.

Mr. Munson at first was inclined to object to the arrangement and questioned Jack as to the character of the business that would detain him in the capital.

Jack then saw that it would be necessary to take Bob's father to a certain extent into his confidence, so he frankly explained the whole matter, without revealing the part of the inlet where the wreck lay buried in the mud.

He also told Mr. Munson about his finding the money box.

He said he intended to take it with him to the city when they went and deposit the money in a savings bank.

Mr. Munson listened to Jack's story in some astonishment.



He congratulated the boy on finding so much money in the stony field and told him that as they would remain in Boston until the fifth he would go with him to a good bank and see that his money was deposited to his credit.

As for the supposed treasure in the wreck in the inlet, he was inclined to regard the project of hunting for it as somewhat visionary; still if Jack was absolutely bent on undertaking the scheme he said he would give it his countenance provided the matter was put through in a sensible and safe way.

He proposed that while they were in Boston to consult with a wrecking company, and to have a competent man sent down to supervise the work with the necessary apparatus.

If the manager of the company thought that Jack, with some instruction, could safely undertake the diving part of the affair, well and good; if not, then a professional diver would have to be engaged or the scheme abandoned.

Jack agreed to Mr. Munson's proposition and thanked him for his encouragement.

Next morning at breakfast Jack said that he had been invited to go to Boston with Mr. Munson and Bob to spend the Fourth in the city, and he presumed there was no objection to his going.

Mr. Stapleton looked rather pleased than otherwise and said he had no objection to Jack's trip to Boston.

The fact of the matter was he was secretly glad to be rid of his nephew for a day, so that he could make a thorough search of the barn and other outhouses for the money box.

When his uncle was out of earshot Jack told his aunt that he expected to be away several days at least.

He also told her that he intended to take his money to the city and deposit it in a Boston savings bank.

He further told her that the money was always at her service when she needed it for any purposes whatsoever.

"You've always stood up for me, Aunt Mary," he said, "and I mean to stand by you."

"Thank you, Jack," she replied, kissing him in a motherly way. "You're a good boy, and I hope you will always be happy and prosperous."

That night Jack told Andy to dig up the box for him the first thing in the morning, wrap it up in paper and hide it at some spot down the lane where he could get it on his way to Mr. Munson's.

Andy promised to do so.

When Jack turned out at half-past five Andy told him on the quiet where he would find the box.

After breakfast he bade his uncle and aunt good-by, and started for the Munson farm.

He found the box all right, and taking it under his arm walked along the short stretch of road as blithe as a bird.

Mr. Munson and Bob were waiting for him with the light wagon already hitched to a fast mare which was to take them several miles across the country to the railroad station.

One of the farmer's hired hands went along to bring the rig back.

They reached Boston about noon, and went to a moderate priced hotel for dinner, after which the three went out to see the sights and enjoy themselves.

After supper they took in the fireworks at a big enclosed park, and went to bed around midnight.

Next morning Mr. Munson hunted up a savings bank, and Jack was duly accepted as a depositor.

Then they obtained the address of a wrecking company and made a call on the president.

Mr. Munson explained the object of their visit.

He wanted a diving plant sent down to his farm in charge of a man experienced in its operation.

The wreck that was to be explored was only a few yards under the surface at low water.

Indicating Jack, he said the boy would do the underwater work if properly instructed in the use of the diving-suit.

Then he asked what the company's terms would be under the conditions suggested.

The president asked a number of questions, many of them addressed to Jack.

He said the arrangement was an unusual one, but he guessed it could be put through.

One of his experts would give the boy the requisite instructions, and would put him through a practical test at a certain point in the harbor where the company was doing some diving work for the city.

Then he stated that the company's terms would be so much per day from the time the man and the outfit left Boston until both were returned to the city.

This being agreed on, the president wrote a letter to the diver in charge of the work in Boston harbor, and instructed him to fit the lad for the work in contemplation.

After dinner Mr. Munson and the two boys set out for the spot where the company was at work.

On arriving at the place they found that Jack was expected, as the president had communicated with the expert by phone.

A diving suit that was just about the boy's size had been sent to the float, and after the diver had fully explained things to Jack he was told to put the suit on, which he did.

The boy felt as if he never could get around with the weighted boot attachment, for each foot felt as if it weighed a ton.

The diver told him that he wouldn't notice this impediment under the water.

Finally the metallic headpiece was screwed on his shoulders, and then Jack looked like a very curious object indeed.

A ladder extended from the float down into the water. As soon as the diver had adjusted his own headpiece he descended this ladder and disappeared from sight.

Then Jack, according to previous directions, followed him.



His sensations were peculiar as he slowly descended into the shallow depths of that part of the harbor.

He found the diver at the bottom waiting for him with a portable hand electric light arrangement that illuminated the water well enough for all practical purposes.

The boy took his first practical lesson in the divers' business, and before he returned to the float and the light of day again he had acquired considerable confidence and skill in underwater operations.

He was told to come again on the following morning, when he would receive his final instructions and another practical lesson which the diver said ought to fit him to undertake the business he had in view.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE ROAD TO WEALTH.

On the seventh of July the party, accompanied by one of the wrecking company's employees and the diving outfit, arrived at the railroad station nearest to the village of Fairdale.

Mr. Munson had telegraphed for a suitable wagon to meet them, and they found it waiting the arrival of the train.

The apparatus was loaded on the vehicle, the party got in with it, and the trip was made back to the Munson farm.

The locality of the wreck was inspected, and then, while the construction of a good-sized and solid raft was begun under direction of the company's man, Jack returned to his uncle's farm.

Mr. Stapleton looked rather sour and unforbidding, having, as a matter of course, failed to find the money-box, though he had hunted hard for it during the three days Jack was away.

He didn't say anything, however, but the boy got a hint of what had transpired from Andy, who had noticed what the farmer was up to, and had been secretly laughing in his sleeve at him.

Jack stated at the supper table that he would be over at the Munson farm probably all of next day.

Mr. Stapleton was curious to learn what business was taking him there.

As Jack wouldn't gratify his curiosity, he refused to let the boy go.

Jack said he had to go, and appealed to his aunt, who supported him in the matter, so that in the end he had his own way.

After attending to his morning chores and helping Andy at the barn, Jack started for the Munson farm fully prepared to make his first essay as a diver on his own account.

Mr. Munson, Bob, the man from the wrecking company, and the outfit, were waiting for him to put in his appearance.

All hands immediately jumped into the wagon, and were driven to the point along the inlet where the completed raft was moored.

"This raft will answer first class for a swimming-stage when we are through with it," remarked Bob.

"That's what it will," replied Jack.

The diving outfit was carried aboard the float, and the air-pump placed in position.

Then the raft was pulled out to a spot almost above the wreck.

By that time Jack was inside of his diving-dress.

After receiving some words of advice from the man in charge, the helmet was secured over his head, and Jack started to descend the ladder which had been weighted and placed in position.

In a few moments he was under water, and a dozen steps downward landed him on the deck of the derelict.

With the portable electric illuminator in his hand the boy looked around him.

While it was true that the deck of the wreck was thick with mud, the bulwarks, with the old-time caronnades thrust through damaged port-holes, easily demonstrated that he was treading above the planks of what had once been a good-sized craft.

In front of him was the high poop cabin section, still in a fair state of preservation.

The door stood wide open, just as it had been pushed back by the water, and the interior looked as black as the ace of spades.

This was the lad's objective point, and he hoped that his investigations therein would be attended with success.

He had not noticed this part of the vessel during his brief dive that afternoon when he made his discovery of the existence of the wreck.

Not having a very accurate idea of the construction of vessels with poop decks, especially the high poops of a century previous, he had entertained the belief that the way to the cabin, as well as to the hold, was through a kind of hole or hatchway cut in the deck.

He was therefore surprised, as well as pleased, to find that all he had to do was to walk straight in through the open doorway, without even the necessity of going down a number of brass-bound stairs, as he had seen in yachts and brigs.

Accordingly, he lost no time in entering the cabin of the vessel, without even noticing the word Caliope in large and partially obliterated letters under the break of the poop.

The electric light threw a sufficient radiance around the place for him to easily make out the outlines of the cabin.

The stump of the mizzenmast rose through the mud-covered deck, and pierced the roof.

Abaft of this was a long table littered with the fractured remains of the skylight that once covered the oblong hole above.

A careful inspection of the sides of the cabin showed the tarnished evidences of numerous gilt moldings, and pictured panels.

Six doors opened off into as many staterooms, and Jack examined each in turn, finding nothing therein that looked



like a treasure-chest, but many things that he meant to bring up later on as curiosities.

An open doorway facing the rudder post ushered the boy into the more spacious of the rooms, which had evidently been the captain's private cabin.

He saw many things here that interested him as he flashed his electric light around the place.

At last he noticed an object like a chest standing in one corner.

Going up to it he saw that it was a brass-bound oak box, imbedded in a thick layer of slime that hid half of its proportions.

"This must be the treasure box," he breathed excitedly. "I have had much less trouble getting at it than I expected. But how can we get it out of this place? It must be heavy, and it certainly is well anchored. The only way will be to break it open and bring the money up piecemeal."

With one last glance around the cabin he returned to the deck by the way he came, and soon reappeared up the ladder, like some monster emerging from the sea.

As soon as he stepped on to the float he was relieved of the bulky helmet and breathed again the fresh pure morning air of the inlet.

He hastened to tell Mr. Munson and Bob what he had seen below.

Half an hour later Jack went down again, this time armed with a sharp hatchet.

He splintered the cover, and tearing the broken wood away the electric light revealed numerous small bags, filling the chest almost level with the top.

Jack took a couple and returned to the float.

Mr. Munson cut open one of the bags and a flow of English sovereigns rolled out in his hand.

Bob and his father at once rowed to the shore to get a number of stout meal bags to hold the recovered treasure, and a bucket and a line to raise it to the surface with.

When they returned the bucket was weighed with a stone to carry it down, and Jack accompanied it.

Noon came before they had all the treasure bags on the raft, but they did not pause, except to give Jack intervals for rest above water.

The treasure, which on being subsequently counted was found to foot up a little over 50,000 pounds sterling, or a quarter of a million in American money, was carried to the Munson house and carefully stowed away for the time being.

Toward the close of the afternoon, Jack paid a final visit to the wreck, sending up numerous trophies that he found in the cabin, including pikes, cutlasses, and pistols, that he discovered hanging from a rack.

The float was then towed to the beach and secured for the use of bathers, the diving outfit loaded on the farm wagon once more, and the wreck abandoned for good.

Next day the employee of the wrecking company was driven with the apparatus to the station, and took the train back to Boston.

He carried in his pocket a substantial present from Jack that made him feel that the two days he had spent down near Vineyard Sound were the most profitable ones in his life.

A few days afterward Mr. Munson, Jack, and Bob conveyed the 50,000 pounds English money to Boston, where it was disposed of at the current rate of exchange to the sub-treasury to be remelted into American money.

Jack kept his promise and presented Bob with \$50,000, though his friend declared that he was not entitled to it, as his part of the job had been cut out.

Mr. Stapleton was a much astonished man when he learned of the wealth that had fallen to his nephew, and began to put in his claim to take charge of it for Jack's benefit.

His efforts came to naught, as Jack applied to the courts to have Mr. Munson appointed to be his legal guardian on the ground that Mr. Stapleton's record was not sufficiently satisfactory.

As Jack's aunt sided with him, Mr. Munson was duly appointed, and gave bonds for the proper discharge of his trust.

Jack, however, told Mr. Stapleton if he would take a reef in his bad habits he would put him on his feet again, and the farmer, after his chagrin had subsided, accepted his offer, and made his wife happy again by resuming his former position as a respectable member of the community.

Jack quit farm work and prepared himself for college.

Both he and Bob subsequently entered Harvard, and in four years graduated with the average honors.

Jack then bought from his uncle enough of the point to enable him to erect a fine residence commanding an unobstructed view of Vineyard and Nantucket Sounds.

The house was furnished throughout in accordance with Grace Munson's tastes, for soon after its equipment that now charming young lady became Mrs. Jack Granger.

While they were away on their honeymoon the poor-looking Stapleton farmhouse was demolished, and a cosy and substantial home for the boy's uncle and aunt to pass the rest of their lives in was built down near the road that led to the village.

And now, reader, having told my story, I leave in the full possession of health, happiness and abundant prosperity the grown boy who through his own exertions found the road to wealth.

#### THE END.

Read "ON THE WING; OR, THE YOUNG MERCURY OF WALL STREET," which will be the next number (78) of "Fame and Fortune Weekly."

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